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April

Bill·Dale Marcinko's

AFTA

The Magazine of Temporary Culture

News and Reviews on
Books Music Film Television Comics

AFTA CONTENTS

"The definition of a novel is a long narrative in which a character (or characters) goes through a series of events which brings about some fundamental change in his character and/or his surroundings. Would AFTA, then, qualify as a novel?"

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CONTRIBUTING

Interviews, articles, and reviews on all facets of popular culture are wanted. Art, photos and satire is especially appreciated. If you want to do "spot illustrations" (the small drawings breaking up columns of print in AFTA), the size should be 4" x 6" (with the 4" side at the top), in black ink on white paper or board. Send as many as you want, although I like film, tv, record-related drawings or satirical cartoons with a social or political theme.

IMPORTANT**All contributions or letters must include stamps or SASE's (stamped, self-addressed envelopes) or I will not reply. Last year I spent $400.00 on stamps returning art and articles. If you do not include return postage, the art will be destroyed. First class rates are killing me.

AFTA is a member in good standing of the following groups: (If you want to join, please write to me and ask for info)

All fanzine editors join the fanzine co-op/apa
THE FANZINE NETWORK: Write: Ward O. Batty, 944 Austin Av, NE, Atlanta, GA 30307. Recommended.

Words From Bill-Dale

BILL AS HE APPEARED IN "THE MALTESE FALCON."

BBC

Hello. My name's Bill-Dale Marcinko. This is my magazine, AFTA. The initials for Ascension from the Ashes. Those passionate enough will find meaning in that.

I am called Billy by my family. My friends don't. They want to act grown up and smoke cig-ar-ettes and be chic and oh so clever--I want to have fun. I am afraid of people who want to grow up quickly. I feel sorry for adults sometimes for they have exterminated all sense of wonder in life.

Most people call me Bill-Dale, or the "Kid." Many people have their special names for me, known only to us. Many others have special names for me, known only to them. I rarely answer to Bill. Common. Common.

I am the only person in this magazine who can talk in italics, which is not easy.

I was born in Wharton, NJ (Scourge of Mankind--that's on the license plates). Living my whole life in New Jersey may explain a good number of my problems. You are all welcome to come visit me, especially if you are going to the beach (I love the beach), but not if you're going to beat me up (as someone did in July).

My parents came from a small mining town in Pennsylvania, called Winburne. They closed the mines a long time ago, built a highway near the town (Route 80). There was no exit or entry ramp for Winburne. Life went by and forgot Winburne. Most people in the town moved east to Northwest New Jersey.

I have lived in New Jersey all my life. I have wobbled between the simple strength and good country wisdom of small towns and big families and the intellectual cynicism of the big cities. My idols are Woody Allen and Bruce Springsteen. I have always been at war with myself.

I write. When I write, I think I am building highways where people can escape their towns when the mines close down.

I was the smart but shy one in school. I had few friends, and remember the experience of being an outcast. I tried to pretend for the first 15 years of my life that I wasn't bothered by being a misfit. I tried to convince myself I wasn't lonely.

When that failed, I admitted that I was. Things have improved steadily since. I am really quite happy now; I wake up every morning and realize that I am hardly the person I want to be; that I have hardly loved. It is hard for me to be proud of past accomplishments; However, I have visions of future successes, which are sublime, and they sustain me.

I think that I sympathize easily and trust people readily because I never got picked first in kickball. I was always next to last (never last, last was always Nancy Jaquish who everyone called "Dead Skunk" and who once squeezed a turtle so tight it squirted and kept a carton of milk in her desk till it soured, then she smashed it on the floor of Mrs. Barlow's third grade classroom. I always called her Nancy.

I used to be short and skinny, then tall and skinny, then short and not so skinny. I think I have missed the 'blossoming' period in my life where I would ride around in convertibles and pick up girls and have lots of sex. I have gone straight to middle age.

My eyes are bad. I am lost without my glasses. I am getting fat.

I fear boredom and alienation, and the flatness therein. I love all humor and the shine therein.

I often spend much time being nostalgic over lost loves I have never had.

I like to be outdoors whenever I can. I love hiking, swimming (especially swimming). I love to travel. I can't seem to work up interest in competitive sports (either viewing or participating). I feel left out during the World Series and Bowl Games. I like to wrestle and tickle people. I greet everyone with a hug unless they have a disease or don't like hugs.

I despise anyone who calls themself a "poet" or "artist". I dislike pretentiousness and smugness--any attitude which alienates people. I don't like people who pretend they are "elite"--who hold their heads up high above the masses. "ART" is a word created by poor storytellers and technicians to cover up the deficiencies in their craft. Calling something "art" makes it mysterious and inaccessible, and therefore value. It removes it from criticism.

I am not an artist. I'm just a fool storyteller. I like what I say to be simple and accessible; I try to write like I talk. I'm the kind of person you listen to on a muggy summer day on your front porch while sipping lemonade who you know is full of shit but you don't care because the stories are fun to listen to. So you do.

Carnivals and circuses and amusement parks (especially amusement parks) are the holy shrines in my life. I don't have many sacred cows--most Popes, clergymen, politicians, poets, intellectuals and others who pretend they "know", well they can take a flying leap. I am more than willing to give them a push. What do they know about life? Little.

I am optimistic about the future. I am optimistic about people. I am constantly trying to re-establish new families as the operative ones fail. I am trying to connect and re-connect. I want AFTA to be kind of a family. That, I think, is my dream.

Yeah.

About people's potential for good, I believe in it religiously. I feel we are all magicians, zapping the people and things around us with power and grace and *spark* When I see people who have lost the confidence in their power to create magic, people who have resigned themselves to an uneventful and predictable existence, I am truly sad, more than I can ever tell.

Magic, to me, is the ability to transform and transmute the ordinary into the special. Coal into diamonds.

My favorite quote is from EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES by Tom Robbins:

"To the extent that this world surrenders its richness and diversity, it surrenders its poetry. To the extent that it relinquishes its capacity to surprise, it relinquishes its magic. To the extent that it loses its ability to tolerate ridiculous and even dangerous exceptions, it loses its grace. As its options (no matter how absurd or unlikely) diminish, so do its chances for the future."

AFTA is one year old today. I have tried to keep my promise to answer all my letters personally, mail out all the AFTA's personally, and to supervise everything myself.

I published two issues of AFTA in 1978. I fully intend to publish at least 4 this year, in January, April, July, and October.

When I published AFTA #1 and #2, I was never thinking about the long run (in terms of money, editorial control, etc.). AFTA 1978 was a loving nostalgic trip for me, a Sixties reunion. A trip back to the Good Old Days of Fandom--when people still believed in the power of activism and the ability to love.

AFTA-1979 must continue. I see the evil and horror and apathy around me, and I realize that it isn't enough just to have a nice reunion, to publish one magazine which is a birthday present to everyone. It must turn into a fight. A fight against commercialism, against banality, against all of the forces IN FANDOM and OUT THERE which are trying to turn us into machines.

I am going to pursue AFTA-1979 with all the energy I have. I want AFTA to rise above the function of most magazines, just to entertain.

I dislike most magazines. I look for a form somewhere between a letter and magazine. The Significant magazines, the old Rolling Stone, the old Crawdaddy, the old Village Voice, the old Berkeley Barb-- they are gone. The new bastardizations are nice, but not the same. They lack passion. They lack the presence of a real person. They lack hope.

Perhaps the editors have grown up; perhaps they have lost sight. PERHAPS (and this is the most possible, I suspect) they have fallen to a common disease: Success. They have been forced to compromise and change in order to appeal to a broader audience.

I have some safeguards built in that will prevent that from happening. AFTA is non-profit. I do it because I like doing it. If I need money, I do something useful.

This may not be enough of a safeguard. So I want to ask you for a favor. If I get predictable, if I get "commercial", if I start to make decisions that smack of "LCD" (Lowest Common Denominator), then you must keep me honest. You must write me and tell me I'm full of it. You are the ultimate safeguard. I want each and everyone of you to write me when you get this. I want you to be part of it.

I want to revive the field of human publishing. I want to create the presence of a "person" in the work. AFTA may come across as a hodgepodge of my tiresome and egotistical wit. It may come across as adolescent melodrama. So be it. I'm an adult with an adolescent perspective. Or as Lou Reed would say, a "rock and roll heart."

I started AFTA to make friends, create a family--a subculture of media critics and just plain crazy people who can come together, amidst the mainstream melodrama. I want AFTA to be an alternative, a place to come to.

I want you to be my brothers and sisters. The families are going, going, gone. It's time to build new ones. College campuses have turned into factories, churning out diplomas with startling efficiency. Education by rote memorization is the rule now. Students have turned into cut-throat rivals, competiting for .0001 point of a grade. College community? No such thing, anymore.

I want AFTA to be a party line. Let off steam. Be honest. Make bad puns. Fart.

The model for AFTA is a broken down roller coaster at Bertrand's Island Amusement Park in Lake Hopatcong, NJ. I want to fill it with bumps and twists.

I run things as a sort of benign dictatorship. I do much of the work. I don't have a staff of regular writers. Each issue can have a totally different set of contributors than the previous. My writers and artists come and go. They write what they want to write.

All articles are subject to my personal bias, my sense of wit and writing. All I ask is that when you write you be direct. You be intense. If you want to get "arty" or "mellow out" or get "laid back" write something for your college literary mag

words from bill dale (CONTINUED)

This issue is called "Where are you going, where have you been?"

There will be some fictional characters here in these diary entries. Sometimes it will suddenly become a third-person narrative. Sometimes it will be sad, sometimes funny. Sometimes neither, or both. Maybe you won't be able to tell when something is sad or when something is funny. I have had that trouble all my life.

I can never decide whether life is a comedy with tragic elements or a tragedy with comic relief. I don't know when to laugh.

This issue is the beginning of my personal odyssey, to find those things which are good and pure in my culture. This may be your odyssey too.

I am worried about violence. I got beat up in July over AFTA. I still don't know who did it, or why. The fact that it was one of my friends, who was jealous or angry or bitter towards me, and a friend who couldn't come to me with the problem bothers me.

Also, the beating occured on the eve of my mailing out the second issue. It was intended as a threat (When the person who came to my door asked me if AFTA 2 was out and I said, tomorrow I mail it out, he countered with "Is that a wise thing to do?") I am worried that it will happen again, with AFTA #3, and #4, and that I will never find out why. The fear and paranoia grows.

Therefore, there will be a lot of violence here in this issue.

I am also worried about success; wanting AFTA to grow and make enough money so I can break even and put out issues more often; but wanting it to remain small and personal.

So I will write about success and what it does to people. What it might do to me.

I hope that this issue will be interesting to you. I hope, that if you like it, you will tell your friends, and spread the word about AFTA for me.

It's time to begin...

DIARY ENTRIES

JANUARY 1, 1979, ENTRY 1:

I have a little chart on the wall which keeps count of the number of boys discovered in the Gacy sex-killing case in Des Plaines, Illinois. Police have estimated that Wayne Gacy killed and buried a total of 32 bodies in crude graves in the crawlspace under his home. As of today, the police diggers have found 29. Will they find all 32? This is exciting.

Gacy was, (as I have taken special glee in hearing) "36, a convicted sodomist and part-time clown."

Sodomist and part-time clown.

Welcome to 1979, folks. May this year be a happy one. May joy fill your cups.

I need money to print this issue. I haven't been able to borrow/raise/earn what I need. I'm frantically trying to find people who trust me AND have that kind of money in the first place (my friends are poor)

The search has led nowhere. Either no one has money or no one trusts me. I am afraid to inquire as to which it is.

I want AFTA to be successful. But success terrifies me. It destroys everything I value. Individuality, autonomy, self-control, compassion. It reduces talented people to ass-kissers. They ultimately get rich underestimating the intelligence of the American public. I don't want to.

But I DON'T want AFTA to die, though. The highest priority right now will be keeping AFTA alive. I need money, as capitalistic as it sounds. I need it quick.

Is anyone out there? I will do anything to keep AFTA alive. ANYTHING...

AFTA SHOCKS

Letters

It has come to our attention that you have been practicing medicine illegally (1) without a license and (2) under the assumed name of Dr. Mario Jascalevich. Aside from the legal question here, we are concerned with the ethical problem. For we here at Bob Murray Enterprises also lack ethics and are interested in having you write your life story for our monthly publication The National Star. We would like you to make up as many juicy lies as you can in order to provoke an interest in yourself as well as in our newspaper. We are confident that someone with as interesting a life as you have had is more than able to pad the truth to make it sound bigger and better than it truly is.

Our own publicity department has come up with some ideas if you have any difficulty coming up with some of your own. They suggest you tie in your immoral practice with some of our stock "superstars" such as how you tried to seduce Jackie O. in your examining room, or the time you tried to give Farrah an electrolysis as well as an overdose of curare. Confess to former love affairs with Princess Caroline, Kate Jackson, John Travolta, and Cher.

Think of it, Doctor! Every prisoner and housewife in Bergen County will have your name at the tip of their tongue. Not a cocktail party will go by without your name being mentioned. Supermarkets will bulge with your picture.

We are sure that after considering the alternatives you will send us one of the finest stories this magazine has ever seen.

Thank you.

Yours sensationally,

Myron A. Farber
Editor-in-chief
The National Star

cc: Bob Murray

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I did glance through your anti-pot piece. I did not read it thoroughly and think about it. I will do this later. Government surveys would classify me as a heavy pot smoker. I will go one better; I would classify myself as a heavy pot smoker. I have cut down considerably since leaving school. I maybe get high five to seven times a week these days. Now the rest on the subject is going to be opinions. Some of them may not sound logical to you, but they sound alright to me and you can only make decisions on how you, yourself, see things.

At its worse, you will find that you have been stoned too much and things are slipping. Sometimes you don't notice until things are too late. Pot is a drug, and drugs should not be abused. It takes a certain self-control. For the benefits, I will take the chance that I have the self-control.

I have discussed what I am going to say with other smokers, and they tend to agree. Pot alters your senses, or rather it alters the way your brain perceives what the sense tells you. It does not distort the sense nor does it dull the mind. If I wanted that I would drink; I don't drink. Everything I see straight is the same I see stoned. The brain is more aware of what the senses tell it. I don't say I am a superhero with super senses. The senses are not improved. Let me give an example. I like music. When I am stoned, I don't hear the music any differently but my mind grasps it differently. The brain is completely absorbed in the music. Not space music, mind you, people like the Dead, Neil Young, even Dylan. It is just me and the music and nothing else. Seldom and not for long can I do this straight and know few non-smokers who can.

The conversation which you find so incoherent is because you are operating on a different level (ouch, that sounds bad). High folk have a different "view point", a certain objectivity from which you can see that all these things people take so seriously are only nonsense. The nonsense of high people is not always nonsense to them (once again that didn't sound too good) but the things I think of high make sense when I am straight. Some of the stuff you hear from high people is nonsense, everybody is nonsensical at times. You sure as hell are. It is all part of having a good time.

I don't need pot to have a good time. I have good times with straight people when I am equally as straight. You can be sure any letter I write to you I will be straight at the time I write it.

When I was at school and writing fiction or an article, I would get stoned to zone out other noises and get my attention on what I am working on. My writing is no better nor worse when I am high. Pot is not a miracle drug that will do things at your command, but just alters things (as I explained). What you do in that state of mind is up to the individual.

I would say pot has changed my personality. You did not know me before, but take my word for it, it gave me the objectivity to see what was wrong. Not just like that. A lot of soul searching, but "you cannot see the forest if you're one of the trees."

--Name withheld on request

I have smoked pot a number of times over the last few years. Government surveys, however, would probably classify me as a near non-smoker.

I think everyone should try pot, at least once. Well, actually a few times, since once is not enough generally. I liked getting high (if I said I didn't I don't think I would be being honest). I don't think pot should be illegal. It probably much less dangerous than alcohol. I think pot should be legitimized, and the packaging and distribution should be taken out of the hands of the criminals and goofballs (like the ones who lace pot with PCP and other substances). Although I am quite anti-pot and will speak my piece when the subject arises, I do not think I must legislate my opinion and lifestyle (which some people, like Anita Bryant, think they can do). I will mention it. And this is my story:

There were basically two reasons I smoked. One for the social aspect (it was more complicated than peer pressure), one for the cognitive side effects.

The times I have smoked pot, it has been done to establish a condition of intimacy with the one or two people I smoked with (I

afta - shocks (CONTINUED)

do not smoke in large crowds, movie theatres, public places--THAT is a violation of others' rights) There is something inherent in the ACT of smoking pot (or getting drunk) that establishes a feeling of camaraderie and intimacy with the people you did it with. You have SHARED SOMETHING SPECIAL. A bond is created. I liked that. I liked the way people seemed to open up, be freer and more spontaneous under the influence of drugs.

REMAKE/REMODEL: I asked myself whether I could work to get all these things without drugs? The answer came yes. I tried to find ways to be more honest around people, more spontaneous and intimate and caring. I tried to help them grow. I tried to help them duplicate the wild, nonsensical flow of relating that is so common under pot.

Cognitive effects. These are diffusion (images floating in and out, things soften, unfocus), concentration (zero-ing in), nonsensing (looking at things super-objectively, seeing the folly to the ordinary and mundane), grandeur (the feeling that the quality of a thought is more intense, profound, or religious).

REMAKE/REMODEL: I asked myself whether I could make my mind do all these things? Answer came yes. I am working on it.

And all without the expense, legal threat, and (some) social negativity. What did I need pot for?

Answer: I didn't. There are enough chemicals and hormones and mysteries in my brain already to create mind-boggling scenes. Call me hokey, call me cliche, but I get turned-on by the scent of optimism; I am addicted to emotional honesty, to good conversation, to good movies, good books. Being more in control, and not polluting my body with foreign chemicals (I'm starting to worry about the food and air I breathe, the exercise I get--I think that's important--anyone that tells you health nuts are crazy, they are wrong. Health is serious business.

What is life without pot like? I have clarity of thought. I have confidence in myself. I have control. That's a better way to be.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Here's one for your dead baby joke contest: Why do people boil water when a woman is giving birth? So if the baby is stillborn, they can make soup.

Ha ha ha.

--Obviously doesn't know what issue it is

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I noticed that in some of your ads for AFTA you advertised an article on bisexuality. I would just like to say that if there are any homosexual or bisexual preverts reading this issue that they should believe that Christ died on the cross for their sins and they won't be homosexuals and do those dirty things anymore.

--Priscilla Pimp
Cherry Hill, NJ

P.S. Why aren't there any pictures?

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

AFTA #2 arrived a few days ago. You're still strange. And now I think I know why.

As everyone is aware, the cloning of a human being is still not technically feasible. Yet here you are, alive again, after being unquestionably dead (I know, I read the announcements). Since true death is irrevocable, I conclude that either you are a) frog, or b) a vampire. Either way it's easy to understand why you're strange. *(A note here for the uninitiated--last issue I rose from the dead in the form of a clone. However, I was born without a backbone this time, and I feel there may be some problems in the future concerning that)*

If you are a frog, you live in ponds. People who live in ponds cannot be expected to see things the way a normal person like me might. And also your toes are webbed.

If you are a vampire, you lose your supernatural abilities during the daylight, except at the exact moment of noon. And if you see mustard seeds you have to stop to count them. These traits are doubtless occasionally aggravating, and might very well lead to deep-rooted psychological problems.

You are most likely manic-depressive, and therefore incapable of seeing the world the same way a normal person like me might. And also you have to bite pretty girls to suck their ~~bad~~ blood.

Thus, in your manic state (assuming that you're a vampire, which I consider more likely than the frog theory), you produce AFTA. And in your depressive state you see how futile it all is, but are too despondent to worry about doing anything to stop it. You are caught in a vicious trap.

And nobody cares.

AFTA comes out in an unattractive format. It's filled with random blitherings. The only thing of real interest in it is the humor. If I were Bud Plant, I certainly wouldn't be interested in carrying it; with its present structure, AFTA's going to appeal to maybe 500 hard-core fanatics at most. No shit. It's a losing proposition, and there's no way to turn it around short of changing into something else.

What really gets to me is that anyone could have the audacity to revive the old Marvel/DC debate. I was under the impression that the argument was settled ten years ago with the decision that Marvel was comparable to oranges and DC to apples.

Did you know that if you take a small piece of Tootsie Roll, turn it around in your fingers, then poke at it with a nail, it turns into something vaguely resembling a raisin?

My raisin was squashed in the mail. May I have a replacement?

What good are comic book reviews? It certainly isn't an aid to deciding where to invest 40c. Far as I can tell, a review is nothing more than an loc sent to a fanzine instead of the comic. Mostly, they're stupid. Are they there to take up space?

Don't you know that a Kirby cover doesn't automatically sell anymore?

--Dennis Mallonee

Yes.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Join the Foreign Legion? Surely you Geste?

--Harold
San Bernadino

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

You have several humorous and/or satirical pieces in AFTA 2. You also have several pieces that I can not tell if you're being serious or humorous! And it's not just me. It sets a weird tone for the whole issue. You must put "keys" in your writing from time to time to help us know which direction to go.

--Wally Stoelting

I am a devotee of black humor, which uses humor to treat serious subjects in such a way which elicits laughter. But there is enough "seriousness" in the comedy, to give you a strange feeling that you shouldn't be laughing. Joseph Heller, Monty Python, Michael O'Donoughue.

From last issue, West's "When I was a little girl it was not so bad because I got used to the kids on the block makeing fun of me, but now I would like to have boyfriends like the other girls and go out on Saturday nites, but no boy will take me because I was born without a nose--although I am a good dancer and have a nice shape and my father buys me pretty clothes. I have a big hole in the middle of my face that scares people even myself. Ought I committ suicide?"

What do you do when confronted with that? Laugh? Cry? Both?

Why do I do that? Well, for the longest time (since Kennedy's assassination, I think) life has FELT like that to me. Black.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Why do people climb a mountain? Because they want to get high.
Why do people take drugs? Because they're there.

--Kevin Postupack
An ex-roommate of Bill's

Dear Bill-Dale:

I am writing you because I think you may be able to understand what I'm going through. I have a friend whose name is Jim. Jim and I have known each other for six years. We met in high school and we are now going to the same college.

Jim is a great guy. I know that if I ever had a problem or needed any kind of help, Jim would be there. There is nothing we wouldn't sacrifice to make each other happy. When one of us is down, the other always tries to cheer him up. We make each other laugh all the time; we can talk for hours: we rarely get bored. We do everything together. Go to rock concerts, go to the beach, to movies, go out driving in Jim's broken down old Buick. Although it sounds funny for me to say this about another man, I really think I love him. A lot.

Here is my problem: Lately I've been noticing, I don't know how to say this, I've been physically (sexually?) attracted to Jim. I was really frightened and confused over this at first. I told Jim about it (we have no secrets from each other) and although he admitted he felt the same way sometimes, I think that just made things worse.

Still these thoughts persist. After awhile they didn't bother me so much. I don't know how to say this, but it seemed almost natural (?) that I should want to show him my feelings by touching him.

I'm afraid I may be sick, you know, have a psychological problem. I've been trying to figure everything out, I've been reading books and talking to people about bisexuality. Most people think it is either a psychological problem, I'm some kind of pervert, or that it's a sin, that I'm gonna be punished for. I don't see anything wrong with it. Is there?

Is it wrong to want to be as physically close to someone as we are mentally close?

--Bob (last name withheld)

(Bob, my friend, you are one of the healthy folk. Sick people fear, condemn, moralize, and talk of sin. They are so afraid of touching other human beings, taking risks with their feelings, they restrict themselves to only the most conventional expressions of love (heterosexual romance and marraige). You made a mistake--you thought in New and Original ways which violated the status quo. Believe me, that is a symptom of health, not sickness.

It has always been my assumption that bisexuality is completely natural. However, being a bisexual is rough going: society wants you to be a straight or wants you channeled into the stereotype of the limp-wristed, effeminate homosexual. Being a healthy, normal-looking person and a bisexual is disturbing to both the straight AND GAY communities. If you plan on continuing this EVIL practice of loving your friends, expect a lot of shit to be levelled at you.

Please take pride in your ability to express your feelings for someone you love (regardless of gender) verbally and physically--most people cannot do either. Anything which brings pleasure, enlightenment, happiness, and excitement to two people who are not hurting anyone--how can that be wrong, I ask you. Hell, your kind of honesty and sensitivity should not only be permitted, it should be encouraged.

Most male-male and female-female friendships in today's society (especially male-male) are shallow and ultimately subordinate to the traditional hetero trip of dating and mating. This must be changed. How can anyone channel feelings of love and affection (which have no gender) to only the opposite gender. This is terribly schizophrenic. Heterosexuals are only capable of touching 50% of the population. Bisexuals are capable of expressing physical affection and messages for 100%. If anything, it seems like the straights are getting the short end of the stick.

Well, you can tell your priests, shrinks, teachers, and anyone who tells you you are "sick" that Bill-Dale goes on record saying

afta-shocks (CONTINUED)

you are twice as healthy as they are. You love Jim, that is obvious. Therefore I support and applaud you and wish you all the strength and joy that is there for you to find.

Things will not be easy. You will be expelled from social circles and hated and feared and spit on. Society's sages and leaders think you are sick, you see, and they will exterminate you from the population, seeking to purify their numbers like Hitler did. You may wish many times that you would have never thought or felt the way you did. You may wish you were like them. Well, don't be. Please. The society needs people with the understanding of love you have. Society needs people with honesty. Society needs people who aren't socially conditioned like Pavlov's dogs to only respond to other people in the most conventional ways.

If you are alone, sectioned off from your peers, do not feel bad. What can anyone say about a world which allows hyman beings to kill and maim each other bodies in war, but will not allow them to touch each other's bodies in love? Even if you may be alone in your convictions, you can feel some pride in the fact that you are, in a small way, a pioneer of love who is molding a better and saner world for us all.

You have my blessing. And anything else you need. --Bill-Dale]

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

REVIEW BY CHESTER COX WHICH APPEARED IN TERIFICC #26...

In issue one, Bill irreverently dissected fandom of today and its state. In doing so, he managed a few observations on the world and people of our world. He may have touched a few people; he changed our lives and touched our minds. He also offended a lot of people whose beliefs are so shaky they can't keep from being afraid of someone casting an objective light on those beliefs. Or even a wry smile.

In AFTA #2, we got raisins. Bill is still the outspoken observer of society, but this time he observes with a confused and disillusioned eye. In his search for causes to rally the people, he casts far into left field (jumping on the paranoic antinuclear bandwagon, joining the functionally illiterate of America who never read beyond the obvious Tv headlines) and belaboring the obvious with "ARE COMICS SEXIST?" and "STAR WARS vs. CE3K--The Inevitable Comparison." (Great title, lousy idea for an AFTA feature.)

AFTA #2 gives the appearance of a) a parting shot. "I won't be back" sort of thing. and b) an attempt to be more middle-class. We fear for it. And, now we learn that there is very real pressure to convince Bill to end or conform, we fear very much for the future of AFTA.

--Chester Cox

[Chet, I don't know to what extent AFTA has become "middle class." AFTA #2 was a kind of summer issue, rather light and up-beat, and in a bloated way, excessive (200 pages!) This issue seems more jagged and desperate. I don't know whether that makes it more middle class. I am pretty much the same person who did #1, #2, and #3, although the tones are different: #1--absurd & fun, #2--silly & warm, #3--bitter & black.

Nuclear power...

(1) I fear the military and terrorist uses. The technology is too available, the materials too available. I don't feel most people are prepared to deal with the responsibility of nuclear weapons.

(2) The safety factor at nuclear plants. One accident would be too horrible to imagine. The workers are getting poisoned, the waste is polluting the air and water streams.

(3) Political and consumer issues: We can choose between a conglomerate controlled power source (nuclear) or an independent, free source (solar). Solar energy is the energy of the people, no one can tax/control regulate the use of the sun (although someone will try). We have to choose between safe, cheap, and democratic energy (solar) or nuclear (dangerous, expensive, corporate-controlled). Which would you choose?

The oil companies have been running little ads and promos for a pro-nuclear platform. I think the pro-nuclear position has been pushed to the 'functionally illiterate of America who never read beyond the obvious TV headlines", and if anything the pro-nuke camp is the bandwagon.

Something else--protesting nuclear power, like protesting Vietnam, is considered a "liberal" act. Aren't the people who protest nukes really the "conservatives?" The ones who are stopping the military/industrial/scientific machinery and looking at it? Seems strange I should be called a liberal, wouldn't you think? Liberals offer a 'restraining' and 'reasonable' voice. It is the right-wing conservatives who want to build more bombs, build more planes, and open more power plants. Does that mean I'm middle class, because I don't want science to progress without the accompanying emotional maturity? Okay, Chet, then I'm middle class.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I am coming out with a new book. It's called PEOPLE YOU WOULD LIKE MOST TO PUT A SPIKE THROUGH THEIR HEAD. Here is the top ten on the list.

1. John Travolta
2. Gig Young
3. Chuck Barris
4. Don Kirshner
5. Brett Somers
6. Leif Garrett
7. Lillian Carter
8. John Davidson
9. All of the Bee Gees
10. Donny Osmond

--Irving Wallace
Publishers Palace, NY

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I picked up AFTA 2 and Too at a convention last Sunday, and then went out to lunch at Wendy's Hamburgers. I took AFTA inside, got my food and sat down at a table, looked at that sheaf of papers inside, took a bite of my burger, and read about your attack. I read it over and over several times to make certain I was not hallucinating or that you were not just snowing us with another brilliant hoax. When it finally registered my appetite took a vacation to Anaheim. I couldn't eat. I couldn't think straight (not that I usually do think that way). I just did not want to believe that there exist such fanatical reactionary bastards in the world of fandom, such blindness, such ignorance, that frustrated ability to convey one's feelings in any other manner besides mindless violence! I never thought people could be inflamed by your social commentary and religious satire. AFTA is the greatest thing since the creative process.

It is a revolutionary concept. You have affected people's souls, Marcinko, influenced their lives powerfully, moved them to violence! Dissension, man dissension! This reactionary backlash is so typical. It happened in the Sixties. When the youth spoke out for what was RIGHT, look what happened. The shit they went through. They even died for it. Idon't know if it was worth it. I will not go as far to say I feel AFTA is worth dying for. At least, not yet. *[I am praying that the attack in July was just an act of random senseless violence. To assume that these people are going to continue to protest in this fashion issue after issue does not sit too well with me. I can't see anything in AFTA that wasn't stated more eloquently and strongly elsewhere. There are certainly more popular and powerful people around to beat up. I still don't know why I was chosen, and honestly don't want to buy the suggestion that it was something in AFTA that inflamed these people. However, with no clues to go on, what you say is as valid as what anyone else says.*

At this point I will quote you a letter which was printed in The Richmond News-Leader in response to a series of frontpage articles questioning the divinity of Christ and the factuality of so-called miraculous events in the Bible (virgin birth, etc.)

"The News Leader has no business advocating political conservatism, because on its front page it has blasphemed God, and given up any reason for being conservative. If Jesus is not the very God, eternal and unchanging, because it would be decided by the whims of man and not the word of God. What was wrong 20 years ago could be perfectly all right now This is not the case. I am only 16 years old, but many people believe that I am very conservative. The reasons for this are simple:

I hate Communism because God hates Communism; I hate Liberalism because God hates Liberalism; I hate Socialism because God hates Socialism; I hate pornography because God hates pornography; I hate homosexuality because God hates homosexuality; I hate immodest dress because God hates immodest dress; I hate long hair on men because God hates long hair on men; I hate rock music because God hates rock music; and I hate modernism because God hates modernism. In fact, if I were not a born-again Christian who believes in the inspiration of the Bible, I know that I would be a Hippie-haired, pot-smoking Liberal, because that is what we all are naturally. --JOEY SIMON

There are scores out there, I'm sure, who would not find anything extraordinarily amiss in the above letter.

Thanks, Bill-Dale Marcinko. Thanks for putting into words what I have been feeling and wanting for a long time. You may not have erected any new signposts in my life, but have certainly illuminated the ones already there. The sun keeps going behind the clouds, but maybe not as often as before.

Sometimes, though, I wonder maybe Billy Joel was right when he said, "I used to have all my pointless points of view, now I realize just surviving is a noble cause." Vonnegut himself says to hold off on trying to change the world until you get a little older with some clout behind you. Enjoy yourself now, he says, while you're young, and still free-minded. Harry Chapin said, "We cannot free the land until we free ourselves." This is so true. And it appears that so many are just plain unable to free themselves.

--Len Moore

[I disagree with Vonnegut. I think the past-time of being a social activist must go on through high school and college. College is the ideal place to be socially/politically aware, free time, no real responsibility, no security/home/wife/kids to dump if you decide to dedicate yourself to a cause. Also, I'm sure that if you were to have a good time now and plan to be socially active LATER ON, you would get caught up in the American Dream, get your house, your car, your 2 kids, your dog, and your little nigger watchman statue for the front yard, and just forget. I think the trouble is not to look down upon young people who are trying to change things, but to find a way to prevent the disease called "terminal adulthood" and create a condition of permanent "adolescence" where we can all be involved in a process of continual change throughout our life, from 6 to 60.)

Some of you may be wondering where the usual cast of characters is this issue. What, no article by F.P. Sensationalism or Emma C? They're gone, all of them. Especially Spim.

I told him to take his stupid raisins and shove them up his anus. For those of you who remember, Spim scotch-taped a raisin to all the copies of AFTA #2. He kept interrupting practically every article with his stupid raisin advice and reports on migrant raisin pickers. Well, he's gone. [Those checks from the Raisin Foundation where bouncing like a California Grape, anyway, I don't need his money]

afta — shocks (CONTINUED)

Emma Counterculture, a girlfriend for one of the best decades of my life (the Sixties, bimbo) is in Nova Scotia. She's lived through DEATH LIB (AFTA #1) and the RAISIN DIGGERS REVOLT (AFTA #2). She's off trying to free the whales (when you free them, where do they go?) in the NEW ENGLAND SAVE THE WHALE CAMPAIGN.

F.P. Sensationalism? Remember his second car theory in #1 and the "Death of Lots of Other People, No, Really" which led off last issue? Well, he's landed a job at THE NATIONAL MIND, the weekly newspaper with color covers for housewives and the faint of mind. Owned by the publishing magnate and all-around crook, Rupert Peach. Seems the old method of payment (lots of free sex from a second cousin of mine, George) isn't good enough for him. He wants to be PAID! Well, EXCCCUUUUSSSSSEEEE ME! Hey, I don't need your articles, F.

Herr Reichstag, the Nazi Tank Assassin, and Jerry Slick, the Mazda killer are serving prison terms in Rahway State Prison, Rahway, New Jersey. Cliff Meth is still dead.

It's just me this issue.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Your tirade against malls confuses me. I thought from earlier comments that you were ecologically aware. If so, you should support the mall concept, as it makes the maximum effective use of the minimum effective land area, thereby leaving other areas of land unspoiled. They are also energy-effective, thereby conserving energy (both directly, by building a single large energy-effective structure, and indirectly, by providing the community with a "one-stop" social and commercial center, thus keeping them off the roads and their gas pedals)

--Richard Fifield

My grudge against malls rested in their handling in control, not so much in their structure. I worry because the stores allow few small businessmen to get a hold. Many stores in malls are franchises. The stores are also painfully middle-class bland. The space inside is not effectively used; it ends up becoming a suburian ghetto. The space is also controlled by the mall owner, raising all sorts of legal rights questions: if we hang out in malls, shouldn't the midway area be public, like a street? The way it is now the mall owner can dictate what you say and do, arrest you, throw you out, etc. For many people, malls are the only place they can hang out and meet friends.

I am also worried about the psychological effects the mall has--the MUZAK, the blandness, and strange plastic security you get from the mall. I am not protesting malls; I just want them built with dignity and compassion; and some respect for the people who will spend a lot of time in them.

However, the bottom line on the mall article, was not to bring up those points, but to use the shopping mall as a metaphor for the commercialism and blandness of today. Like disco, the new conservativism, and tv death, the malls are a frightening sign of the times.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Here is a song I made up:

We gotta purify our country
Like Hitler did to his
We gotta do it right now
And we'll do it like this:
KILL THE NIGGERS, KILL THE JEWS,
KILL THE QUEERS, KILL THE HIPPIES, KILL THE ENVIROMENTALISTS, KILL THE WOMEN'S LIBBERS.

Do you think your readers will like it?

--Emile ("Bud") Clovis
Birmingham, Alabama

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

If you celebrate X-Mas, do you believe in "X"? Just curious.

--A concerned reader
Fort Lauderdale

On one hand, you are funny; you obviously have some talent for writing humor; on the other hand, when you get serious and "60's" you are sophmoric and pretentious. Sixties people are easily vulnerable to satire. That must say something. You do it yourself, with Emma Counterculture, for instance.

Your indictments to turn us all into Activists are neither affecting or controversial. Just embarrassing. Your preaching pollutes your comedy.

--Jeffrey Blair

(I don't want AFTA to be either serious or absurd. I guess I'm trying to blend the two. I've always thought comedy and tragedy were just two different attitudes to deal with the same material, the same questions in life. Survival, glory, death. Many of the Sixties people are easily reduced to stereotypes and comic characters--the potheads, the bikers, the longhairs in Army jackets, the "feeling" and "sensitive" college poets, the Emma Countercultures. They own all of Arlo Guthrie's records, a guitar in one hand, a poem in the other, bathed in denim and corduroy; just waiting for Dylan to step down so they could step in. But again, this is surface. I wasn't a "Sixties" type; I am not now. My hair is short, I wear simple comfortable clothes--t-shirts, turtlenecks. I probably look more establishment than Hippie.

The ideas of the Sixties which emphasized individual rights and social awareness, that was always a part of me. And to be honest, I can satirize the stereotype I was or my friends were/are (I often do), but I can't bring myself to satirize the ideas behind the image. As Elvis Costello/Nick Lowe say, "What's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?"

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I recently took a survey of the young people in America (which, as you know, I have an uncanny rapport with) and here are the results:

The question is WHICH WOULD YOU LIKE DOING MORE, HELPING PEOPLE OR TAKING DRUGS?

16% answered "helping people", 75% answered "taking drugs", and 9% had no opinion. Will you print this in AFTA?

--Geraldo Rivera

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Typical. Typical. Trying to do a National Lampoon letters page, right, fuck-off? Well, it can't be done, unless of course, you make topical but tasteless references to Judy Garland or something about how old and fat and ugly Elizabeth Taylor is getting. Just so you'll know.

--P.J. O'Rourke
Madison Avenue

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I am writing a book on Guyana to cash in on the American public's interest in sickening and morbid tragedies and I thought I would give you a sample to run in AFTA. It's called

GUYANA CLASSIC LINES

"But I don't like grape."

"No Kool-Aid before dinner, kids, it will spoil your appetite."

JIM JONES: "Ha, ha, joke's on you guys. This isn't practice."

KOOL-AID REPRESENTATIVE: "We are coming out with a new flavor for religious cultists. It will be Vitamin C enriched."

I just thought I'd explain the Vitamin C thing. C, like in cyanide, get it, right?

--J.R.R. Tolkien.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I've now read AFTA #2 through three or four times and I can't make up my mind about you. You are either the most relentless unrealist I know, or one of the Few Good People. Reading your personal pieces scattered through the zine(s) I kept ping-ponging between a sort of wistful nostalgia for the days when I, too, believed in people and the power of love and faith for change, and the oh-come-on-now cynicism that kept saying, what year does this kid think it is?

The thing is, I did believe it. Sure I did. And I just hasn't worked. I haven't been able to make anything of it but that. Hundreds of thousands of us worked at it for the better part of eight years and it didn't help more than a fraction--the enviromental movement, feminism, affirmative action. BUt that sticks in the throat. It didn't work. Q.E.D. It can't work. Not within anything resembling the standing system. And I can't say as I did in 1968 that I advocate ripping down the standing system if need be. I fear I've gotten too used to a level of security. (Y'know, the buses will run, the mail will be delivered, the light will go on when you hit the switch; that kind of security.)

I sense that it hurts you that survival is #1, but, man, what would you like to do about it? What do you think anyone can do? I know it's miserable that you've got to have three locks on the apartment door and landlords torch buildings for the insurance bread regardless of who lives there and on and on, but, Goddess, do you see anything to do besides hate it? Try telling 'em about love in the South Bronx.

There's so much I want to go on about. Like the piece about malls and Ronald McDonald. The whole extreme range: blandification or ultra-violence, bondage "fashions". I think both are a reaction to the survival/desperation pattern. Get mindless, one way or another. What on earth is more mindless than disco? The whole disco thing, clothes, sex, seven minute songs with no lyrics (and by sex I mean pick up sex bang bang singles bar type sex) is empty, but at least it's somewhere to go. Like a mall, right. Where do you go? I was thinking about your line about demanding quality in your entertainment, not settling for what's there.

See, I confess to being a rock and roll junkie. The energy, the sense of power and escape ('course I realize how screaming misogynist most of it is; so I wince and bear it). It haunts me. When did I develop this need for heroes, any kind, and this sense of noise and violence? Don't ask me about Alice Cooper or you get the five-paragraph rave. Even Bruce Springsteen, may the powers preserve him forever.

The sense of noise and violence--the other end of bland. Bland is for reassurance. Some kind of comfort. Both STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS are very comforting movies. But noise and violence for for a feeling that there is excitement in the world somewhere, even if you aren't getting any. Or much. And that's Why I Love Bruce Springsteen in a nutshell. He's the major proponent of the "find the excitement no matter what" road. What's strange is the direction it's taking; excitement seems more and more to be bondage and S & M and brutality. And intellectual nervousness, like Elvis Costello or Talking Heads. We're so damn wired.

Hanging out in malls and discos is deliberately NOT demanding quality in entertainment. It's "give us something, somewhere, we'll take it, it's better than nothing." Do you think it's just everything-overdose? Having heard and heard and heard over again that we can have anything we want? Or have people just given up demanding quality cause when you get it it costs too much?

(Picking someone up in a disco is much easier than taking the emotional RISK and RESPONSIBILITY of establishing a relationship with communication and committment. It becomes a machine-trip, because a MACHINE, dig, is the SAFEST way to live. You don't have to take risks if you are a machine. You don't have to think or feel in New Ways. You can zip along in McDonald's Heaven.)

I think we'd like to care about each other, but we're scared. Or bored. Costs too much, like quality. Chance of being hurt. But love is as popular as ever. LOVE STORY, Barry Manilow. People probably cry buckets over that stuff and wouldn't weep if their best friend was shot.

(Again, emotion without committment. Sentiment. It is cheap, objectified, removed and socially safe. Sentiment. The pretense of feeling without any real stake in it, if

you know what I mean. Safety. No risks. Oh, yes, I agree with you=there is much sentiment around today. Little love. Love requires too much of you. Most people don't even know what love is, I don't think) Sentiment can be indulged in over and over again without any real effort.)

I have a theory that love, that is, romantic love, male/female love is the ultimate victim of Bland? I know myself I'm sick to death of hearing how great it is, thousands of songs, movies, novels... I mutter darkly about abolishing the whole heterosexual structure that's produced nothing much more than subordinate women and truckloads of bad art. It's insidious and almost evil that what's supposed to be one of the finest experiences of human nature can become a tiresome cliche, cheap sentiment, tear-jerking for pavlovian masses. One more poster of a man and women walking hand-in-hand along a sunset beach...

The Nazi party marches, the repeal of gay rights laws right and left...I have this awful feeling that we're in for a rightwing backlash that's gonna flatten too many of us.

Why am I telling you all of this stuff? I ought to tell you what I love. Electricity, that's what. I am entirely enchanted by lightning. That charge out of the sky, that flash in the night. I would love to have a radio station on a mountaintop and run it on nothing but lightning and play the best music I could find. I love outer space, And monsters. And the power of surprise. Every feeble attempt I have ever made to be a surprise, the Joker in the Deck, to be a little shock to someone, I cherish. But you see all that shows is a lack of faith in reality cause it's so bloody depressing.

We'll be all right, I think...

--Paula O'Keefe

(Paula, you are certainly not alone. There are other Jokers in the Deck. I, too, love electricity and surprise. I have loved monster movies and rock and roll for as long as I can remember. Probably for surprisingly identical reasons. Paula, by the way, is the central mailer and reigning Goddess of TRANSYLVANIAN CONVENTION, an apa (amateur press association--a club by which everyone types up a little magazine ("zine"), makes copies of it, sends them to Paula, and she puts everything together and sends everyone a copy of the collected contributions) devoted to a movie which I will certainly remember the 70's by--The Rocky Horror Picture Show. All Rocky Horror fans write Shryack Apts. #3, Kirksville, MO 63501

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

As most of you are aware, Vietnam has invaded Cambodia. We have decided to re-institute the draft as one measure to fight inflation in America and preserve the Cambodians right to decide their own destiny. If not in this life, then in the next...

Look, sequels have pulled the movie making industry out of the dumps. Why wouldn't it work for me and my sagging popularity?

Yes, folks, VIETNAM II!

Twice as many slaughtered, more atrocities, more men, more scandals and secret bombings! More money than any war in the history of man!

Any volunteers?

--Jimmy Carter
Washington, D.C.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

How many Popes does it take to wear a t-shirt to an Italian wedding?

--Obviously Polish
Secaucus, New Jersey

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I had the intention of writing a long and detailed letter about AFTA #1; but I sat quiet and it went away. Anything I had to say about #1 I can say about #2.

Rocky Horror and related matters--in college, the guy who lived across the hall from me (a lanky Canadian) streaked, hollered obscenities at girls from his or anybody else's windows, made dildoes in ceramics class, put porno-film poster on his door till I burned them off, and discussed oral sex loudly in the cafeteria. I think he would surely love Rocky Horror, I think you would like him, Bill-Dale. The day he left, in the spring, I was happy I was nice to him twice.

The Bill-Dale Marcinko interview was perhaps not as revealing as you thought it might be; I just read and nodded, yeah, I figured that was what he was like. I mean, all of AFTA 1 and 2 is sort of an interview with you, right? And you'd said most of it between the lines, already.

WHY I LOVE AMERICA/YES I STILL READ COMICS, I Told Them About The Louka, the made-up letters in the letters section, and a lot of little things here and there; ease up, man. So you're some kind of gone-straight Sixties activist still trying to get people to Think about injustice and Get Involved in the less pleasant side of human life and Do Something. Well, a little analogy. Suppose somebody comes up to me on the street, grabs me by the neck and rubs my face in shit. Well, now, possibly this will inspire me to become aware of sanitation problems and unhealthy situations and get into civic work and help others less fortunate and turn the world into a sleepy, green garden of peace and plenty and love. First, however, I'm going to go after the guy who rubbed my face in shit and make sure he never does it again. And most likely, when I later encounter some of the situations he was trying to bring to my attention. I'm going to remember a humiliating and unpleasant experience and say, 'Tough luck, pals.' You can't tell people, 'You must do something about this, this has got to be a part of your reality, you are obligated.' First, that's arguable on the deepest psychological levels, and second, it's got to come from inside. It's a jolt to be reading a letters column and suddenly be knee-deep in a letter about the rape of a deaf-mute retarded girl. Not a jolt that enlightens; one just says, oh crap, he's preaching again.

I notice now that you mention Vonnegut's influence on your prose and thinking. Vonnegut is a grown-up who writes in baby-talk words and baby-talk thoughts. He doesn't make life complicated like it is. He makes it sound very simple. People who want life to be simple say, 'How wise he is!" He sells lots of books, etc. etc.

Looking forward to more AFTA, good luck, you crazy sumbith, I sure wouldn't go a thousand dollars in debt for a stupid fanzine.

--Name withheld on request II*

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I can't believe you. You want to borrow money from ME? A measley two grand? Hey, I have my own problems.

--Mayor Dennis Kucinich
Cleveland, Ohio.

P.S. How many readers of AFTA do you have in Cleveland?

Take Nyquil. And sleep.

--Judy Garland
Overdose Heaven

That's better.

--P.J. O'Rourke
National Lampoon

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Hi, kids, my name is Frank Rizzo. I'd like to say a few words about PAL, Police Athletic League. You can now have a boy of your own that you can call your own. Come, be a big brother. Come to one of our meetings. There we will have on sale many sex aids and pain devices, and the fully illustrated "Sailor's Night Out."

Hey, kids, do you know what the word "homosexual" means? I'm one. All of us here at the Police Athletic League are...

I'M SORRY, YOU CAN'T PRINT ANY MORE OF THAT LETTER. I'M STOPPING THIS LETTERS COLUMN UNLESS THAT SORT OF THING STOPS AT THIS MOMENT. NOT ONLY IS IT SILLY, BUT THE SYNTAX IS VERY POOR.

--Police Constable Pan Am

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Dear Sir:

I am offended by your recent use of Police Constable Pan Am. Not only did you pinch it from Monty Python, using a gimmick like that to end the letter because you can't think of a proper ending, but the general public who have never seen Monty Python will be at a loss to know what you're trying to do. And besides, when are you going to do an article on NBC's new sit com "The Snot Family*"?

The Right Honourable Judge Smith
(Mrs.)
East Westphalia

P.S. *The most obnoxious family alive.

(I am pleased to announce that NBC will broadcast the original tv-movie which served as a pilot for the series as the opening show INTACT. They open a restaurant, the "See If You Can Keep It Down Deli" and AFTA will be there to cover it. Stay tuned.)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I think AFTA was the best thing I have ever seen in my life. You have changed my life completely. I think you are the best writer in the History of Man and I don't know what to tell you except I will give you all my money and my house and my kids if you want them. I have enclosed $1.50 for the third issue.

Can I write for AFTA?

I will be raisin even more money for you because I'm sponsoring a telethon in my area.

--John Smith

afta-shocks (CONTINUED)

(Caught, Spim! I know it's you. You spelling 'raising' RAISIN. Thought you pull one over on me. Hey, you can't fool me with that stupid praise. I know you just want to come back and tape raisins into people's copies. But you're not COMING back, that's that. No way, Spim, no way.)

I don't know what you're talking about. My name is John Smith. I don't know any Spim.

(Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else.)

Huh?

(It's not like I miss him or anything. That's RIGHT OUT!)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Paging through AFTA #2, Volume 1 (this is ridiculous) my first impression was: dumb raisin jokes, Butty and Vaginaca (I thought you'd decided this wasn't funny enough to bother with), drawings of nude women to illustrate "Are Comics Sexist?", of all things: a tasteless Power Girl cartoon, an infinitely tasteless Apology to Everyone (you descend to the level of a kindergartner who wants to shock the grown-ups by saying something "dirty" This destroys the whole point of your little homily to those stifled souls who don't appreciate your apparent addiction to being controversial)

The ass-licking letter section that starts with a silly "boobs" squiggle in which everyone either writes very boring Bible-brandishing LoCs admonishing you to abandon your evil ways or raves about WHY I LOVE AMERICA which I personally thought was as heavy handed as a lead-iced chocolate eclair and flunked out as satire because the "my-country-right-or-wrong-this-is-the-best-of-all-possible-worlds" persona you used kept wearing thin as you all but smacked the reader in the face with the desired conclusions. I hate the "Kid's Night Out" school of writing anyway. It makes the reader feel tainted and evil simply for not being as much of a victim/mess as the hero or for even accepting any meager morsel of the status quo for even one minute.

My initial urge was a strong urge to disassociate myself from AFTA as quickly as possible, despite/because of the fact that it shows every sign of developing into a cult favorite. It's so fannish to lose tons of money and ruin your life by appointing yourself savior to the benighted multitudes who are bedazzled by the crass commercialism everywhere else. And to insult people right and left without checking your facts first and to be controversial just for the sake of being controversial.

There are two excellent reasons for not discussing religion in a fanzine. First, lecturing people about their deficient moral sense and telling them they ought to believe what you believe never changed anybody's mind about anything unless they were terminally wishy-washy in the first place. Religious beliefs aren't really based on rational reasons anyway. If people want to believe that all gays will burn in hell so they can feel superior to somebody, they will, whether you point out that Christ didn't preach the Gospel of hate or not. Second, if you don't anything about religion, you neatly deprive Biblical-minded Godzilla-maniacs of their excuse for writing in and giving sensitive readers nervous breakdowns with their self-righteously hypocritical outlook on life.

The more I look at the illustration on the first page of "Are Comics Sexist?" the less I like it. Why the hell does Supergirl seem to be wearing lace panties instead of hot pants? This is not to mention the cleavage of everyone from Black Widow thru Supergirl. A lot of your "regular correspondents" (gee, I thought you never answered your mail unless people sent threatening notes) seem to have missed the point of the question entirely, or summarily dismissed it to pontificate about "more important" matters. I'm still offended by the naked woman.

I still think the crabs cartoon was sexist as well as tasteless. You seem to be part slippery chameleon, backing off and yessing people to death when they hassle you but going all bold and defiant in print. The interview with yourself and YES I STILL READ COMICS made me feel like slashing my wrists and sticking them in a basin of warm water. *(Feel free.)* We partial telepaths can't take this sort of psychic/emotional overload, especially when there doesn't seem to be any particular purpose to it. So you had a tragic past in the 1960s but you won't tell us about it. Big deal. In fact, you seem more interested in making us play guessing games about your real age, reason for dropping out of college (if that is really you and not another one of those ghastly personae), probability of surviving the possible demise of AFTA without going into suicidal depression, etc. than anything else except impressing us with how idealistic you are. On top of this, you seem to asking us to give you a purpose in life through AFTA and our response to it, restore your faith in humanity, and/or make you a present of our innermost thoughts, feelings, and traumas the way you haven't quite done, despite all your blather. I can't solve your personal problems for you and I'm not sure you even want me to.

I end up doing nothing more constructive than brooding darkly over what's wrong with my own life, which I do quite enough of without your assistance, thank you very much.

I don't think stuff like YES I STILL READ COMICS and last issue's WHY I LOVE AMERICA makes people think at all. In fact, if anything, it's an insult to their intelligence, especially WHY I LOVE AMERICA. It makes them emote. And what they're emoting doesn't seem to be really doing them any good. They end up either feeling tremendously guilty or tremendously defensive toward you. Or toward All the World's Ills, which is something so general it might as well be nothing at all.

Kindly do not mention my name. I have no desire to endure the kind of abuse that has been poured on Marilyn Bethke's head for daring to speak her (female) mind in public over something no more important than this, and I'm sure that if you printed this letter with my name on it every hole-in-the-wall fanzine editor who can't write or spell would be taking me apart for the rest of the year and beyond for daring to criticize the new cult favorite.

--Name withheld on request III

(I didn't write those things for the reasons you mentioned. I am not quite that perverse (or intelligent). I wrote them to tell a story, which you can choose to accept/empathize with/think on or ignore. I am sorry that the pieces sat so poorly with you. It was not my intention to confuse you.

Excuse me for liking naked women. I like naked men, too, except that no one draws them for me.)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

(Briefly summarizing some of the other letters I got (I regret not being able to print more of them), most of the criticism on AFTA #2 was concerned with the size, the weight, the division into two volumes, and the raisin. The format problems should not be apparent this time around. The raisin shouldn't either, because that tit Spim is gone.

Most of the negative letters regarded the use of the complete English language in AFTA (i.e. idiom, slang, those words which are commonly known of as "obscenities"). These letters came from the mighty (Marty Griem refused my invitation to do an interview/biography for the special FANDOM issue in AFTA #4) to the simple quaint. Like Mrs. Rita Jackson (sounds like a Monty Python character, right?) who sent her copies of AFTA #1 and #2 back. She wrote, in part: "I am very disappointed in both issues. When I read your APOLOGY TO EVERYONE, written to those of us who do not enjoy off-color material, I was disgusted. Your reaction was one of a five year old, not one of an editor of a fanzine which showed some potential.

Miss Rita ended with "I do not want them in my house where they might be exposed to some potential subscribers" (Anita, where are you now?)

*Well, Rita, I used to think that those off-color words were immoral and evil and in bad taste. I wagged my head back and forth and clucked my tongue tsk*tsk*tsk and said "Boy, this shows such immaturity"*

But then I realized I was just as much a prisoner as not using them. I was censoring the English language for what reason. Bad taste. But what made the words evil? Were they evil by nature? No, because there were synonyms for the words fuck=copulate, shit=feces, piss=urine, cock=penis, etc. Dammit, it was the connotation. And I was supporting the 'immorality' of the language, I was aiding it's power to hurt.

By not saying those words, I was supporting a senseless concept of 'obscenity' in language, which didn't really need to exist.

Lenny Bruce said that if (the then) President Kennedy got on tv and said, "I just appointed a new nigger to my cabinet today, nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger, then a 5 year old black boy in Alabama would not come home in tears because someone at school called him nigger."

Rita, you and I attribute a sense of evil to the language, to certain offensive words which 'good people' don't use. And just as easily, we can take it off.

MOSCOW (UPI) — The Soviet press says the Big Mac is a big mess, the real American dream as seen through red-tinted glasses.

The weekly New Times described the McDonald's hamburger empire as the epitome of an American capitalistic nightmare: it allegedly exploits workers with low pay, grinds out poor quality food, supports paramilitary organizations, sets up secret informer networks and bends the minds of America's youth.

"McDonald's fully exploits the mentality of the average American who tends to look down upon the whole world from across the two oceans," New Times said.

It charged that Big Mac buns are pumped full of air, and the tomatoes are chemically treated to look fresh.

"It looks appetizing if one does not know of the technological and chemical manipulations that are concealed from the public eye," the international affairs weekly said.

New Times said the Big Mac was a "clearly poor quality product" and asked why it continues to yield ever bigger profits.

The key, it said, was a multimillion-dollar advertising budget and a patriotic campaign to make the hamburger empire synonomous with America — complete with American flags out front and a plastic eagle "that looks at the customer with fierce eyes from the wall inside the stand."

New Times said the patriotic theme is carried on by managers who are under strict instructions to give money to charity, youth and paramilitary organizations.

Meanwhile, the magazine said, McDonald's preys on the young — paying very low salaries to young people.

It said attempts to present employee grievances in an organized manner have prompted the company to set up a "secret apparatus" to slow down organizing attempts "and to prevent discontent from reaching the confrontation stage."

New Times said McDonald's headquarters in Illinois is a symbol of the "now rare specimen" of the authentic American success story.

"How can one help think of the American dream, that seems to have come true," New Times asked. "But has it?"

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?

The 60's were a time of COLLECTIVISM and PROTEST. We defined ourself in social terms; creating words like "The Establishment" for our enemies. By collective purpose and protest, we found meaning in our lives. But wait... We were conformist, often ignorant and intolerant of individuals (Heaven forbid you DIDN'T wear your hair long and wear blue jeans like all those "individual" friends of yours) We didn't know a whole lot about sex, about women, about our own feelings. Often things got out of hand, peaceful demonstrations turned into riots and bloodbaths. We did not have the individual wisdom and discipline to restrain ourselves. We defined things by sex (the hippies were very sexist), socio-economic status (us vs. them), and roles (all cops are pigs)--we weren't that individual , really.

So the "movement" started falling apart, part from our own fear (most activists were out of college and had to become a part of the "Establishment" to survive--get a job, buy a home, get married), part from our impatience, part from the barrage of events that hit us in the early 70's. The recession, Watergate, the final end of the war--all things which people in the 60's knew Nixon was a crook--it wasn't until 1973 and the break-in at Watergate did the older Americans see that.

The 70's were a time of INDIVIDUALISM and PRAGMATISM. We lost trust in our government, we lost trust in our economy and the American dream (through recession and inflation). We turned instead to our bodies, our health, our grades, our individual success, our ability to be aggressive and individualistic. We looked for realistic goals. We also explored our sexuality--women's rights, gay rights, the possibility of alternate lifestyles: (living together outside of marraige, gay lifestyles, communes, etc.). We learned to be selfish again (which is important to some degree)--to love ourselves, be our own best friends, and deal with our personal development--our feelings and actions. Many new religions, grounded more in psychology than mysticism took hold: EST, Scientology, etc. Violence took new and frightening forms. But wait... We began to lose touch with other people's feelings. We became emotional fascists, so concerned about WINNING THROUGH INTIMIDATION and LOOKING OUT FOR #1, our relationships became narcissistic and self-involved. In losing the ability to love, our cultural inventions (disco, shopping malls) became bland, without passion or committment. We turned to our laws. We had more faith in a God of Justice than a God of Love. The Nazis (and their equally violent counterpart the JDL), the KKK, the Anti-Gay movement took the law into their hands. Vigilantism and it's alter-ego terrorism took hold. We elected a president whose only real leadership ability is the lack thereof.

Where are we going? We stand at the brink of the next decade. There are many concerns, not the least of them re-inspiring an involvement in social issues. There are many specific crusades to be fought --sexual rights, abolition of torture, abolition of hunger, the nuclear power issue. There are few people who are willing to fight them.

Our culture signals we want to forget: ANIMAL HOUSE, HAPPY DAYS, LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY, GREASE, STAR WARS, SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER, DISCO, SHOPPING MALLS. We want to be entertained and taken away from our lives, rather than facing them. Any media product too powerful, too intelligent, too significant bites the dust.

What can we do? We must integrate the best of the last two decades. We must be worried about both COLLECTIVE and INDIVIDUAL issues: we must see how they play off of one another, and neither turn completely socialistic or capitalistic/fascistic.

How? First, and foremost, we must involve ourselves. We must not be afraid to take risks. We must read and listen and watch--we must pack our lives with as much information as we can, rather than retreat from it to a world of safety, like Star Wars, where good and evil are easily defined. We must be honest with ourselves, our feelings: we must admit our loneliness, our desire to make things better. Idealism and optimism have been replaced by pragmatism in schools, government, even churches. No one is willing to listen to new plans, new dreams.

It is our time. Now, I don't care if your 12 years old or your 50. You don't have to be part of the "current" generation. Distinctions like that are bigoted. You can trust someone over 30 just as easily as you can someone under 30. Don't say you are too old to change the world. Don't say you aren't old enough. Don't say you will do it tomorrow, when you are done with your term paper or your homework or done panelling the living room. You have a responsibility to involve yourselves in the 80's. If you don't, we can expect a period of time in which the culture will be controlled by a few media giants, the government will be controlled by a few corporate giants, and us "little" people will just get stepped on. Our 1984 will be more sophisticated and devious than the blatent totalitarianism George Orwell spoke of--because ours will have EMOTIONAL fascism as the reigning philosophy. Stand up and be counted. The 80's are here.

The following is an attitudinal chart. In the left column are the attitudes of the 60's; the right column lists the attitudes of the 70's. STEP ONE: In each pair of assumptions, (example: spirituality vs. concretism) circle one (1). STEP TWO: Then take a separate sheet of paper, copy down your choices, and live the rest of your decade by them.

Caution**Do not let events in the news, things your friends or parents tell you, things you learn in school, or your individual past history affect you. When taking this test, it is helpful to remember the following: "You can be what you want to be."

A	B
1. OPTIMISM ("Things will get better")	1. PESSIMISM (Things will get worse")
2. ACTIVISM ("I think being involved in social issues is important.")	2. APATHY ("I don't care, I'm just not interested")
3. COLLECTIVISM ("I have a responsibility to help other human beings")	3. SELFISHNESS ("My only responsibility is towards myself, my grades, my success")
4. SPIRITUALITY ("Alternate forms of reality exist which are equally valid as this plane."	4. CONCRETISM ("The only real things are the things I can touch--only material things are valid")
5. SUSPICIOUS OF MEDIA ("Don't always believe what you read in the newspaper."	5. NO SUSPICION ("Everything on tv is true. How can Walter Cronkite lie to me?")
6. LESS POWER TO MILITARY ("Destroying the world 30 times over is quite sufficient.")	6. MORE POWER TO MILITARY ("We must defend ourselves against those horrible Communists: America must be #1")
7. CONCERNED ABOUT ENVIROMENT	7. WHAT THE HELL IS A FEW FISHES?
8. IDEALISM ("I can change the world so it will match up with the vision of it I have in my mind")	8. PRAGMATISM ("I must accept the fact I am going to have to compromise and admit failure often.")
9. STYLE AS REBELLION ("I must establish my identity by dressing counter to the status quo: bizarre clothes, long hair."	9. STYLE AS INTEGRATION ("I must dress in pseudo-middle age clothes: expensive disco clothes, a nice hairdo.")
10. URGENCY ("The time for change is NOW!")	10. PATIENCE ("Take it easy. Be mellow.")
11. ALTERNATIVES TO FAMILY ("Communes, gypsy lifestyles, living together without marraige, childless marraiges, gay relationships--all of these are just as valid as the status quo")	11. TRADITIONAL FAMILY STRUCTURE ("God says the only right way to live is to get married, stay married, have kids (lots of them--the more kids you have, the more blessings) and to settle down")
12. CONTROVERSY (Seeking something which challenges my beliefs and makes me think)	12. BLANDNESS (Seeking those things which will not disturb my beliefs; wording must be subdued)
13. REALISM (I will look at the realities of life, however unpleasant, and take responsibility for them)	13. ESCAPISM (I will try to avoid the problems by travelling in safe, fantasy worlds. i.e. STAR WARS, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS)
14. HUMANITY (Acceptance of human unpredictability)	14. MACHINERY (Adherence to predictability, efficiency)
15. TAKING RISKS (Enlightenment is the important thing)	15. SECURITY (Survival is the most important thing)
16. FREEDOM TO ACT ("Do you own thing")	16. RIGIDITY (Check with your parents, your priest, your doctor, your encyclopedia, your friends.)
17. A SENSE YOU ARE DEFINED AGAINST HISTORY	17. SENSE YOU ARE DEFINED AGAINST ONLY YOU
18. COOPERATION ("All men are brothers")	18. COMPETITIVENESS ("All men are rivals. Watch them or they will take the better grade, the better job, the better girl, the better slice of pie..)
19. SIGNIFICANCE OF SEX AND LOVE	19. BLANDIFICATION OF SEX AND LOVE (Charley's Angels, disco)
20. SENSE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE IN LIFE	20. GUYANA

PROPHET, PROFIT

What ever happened to...

The 80's are here. Where will some of the prominent activists of the 60's be for the next decade? Here is my own little "Where are they now?" listing:

Bob Dylan

1978 was the year Bob Dylan tired of the audience which sustained him in the 60's (perhaps because he could no longer communicate with them, perhaps because he wanted to expand his appeal to include EVERYONE). Many people have called Bob Dylan a legend. The problem is that Dylan is starting to believe it himself: he has surrounded himself with people who tell him he can do no wrong.

Dylan is trying to capture other markets: the Las Vegas circuit, like Neil Diamond has done (witness his Vegas styled summer show and his sequin, studded white suit and styled disco hairdo) the art film community (Renaldo and Clara). He may be successful and continue to be successful in his attempts (I'm waiting for him to cut a disco record), but we have to ask whether Dylan is capable of creating music which inspires and influences people. Is he a "force" anymore? A hero?

The answer, sadly, is no.

Nowhere is this more evident than in his newest album, Street Legal, one of his most uninspiring and insignificant. But Billie Mudry makes a better case than I...

Street Legal is an incisive view of a man trapped in his own pain. Constantly searching for truth on the road, he inevitably cannot face the confrontation he meets there. He is unable to transcend his own negativity. In this sense Street Legal is a typical Bob Dylan album.

The inclusion of "disco" sound, three women doing backup vocals and poor production have all been criticized at length. But these criticism only scratch the surface of what is truly "wrong" with the album. The music is actually an excellent blend of many popular musical influences such as blues, rock, reggae and folk. The disco element exists in an understated form which is not objectionable and actually proves that a good artist can successfully include seemingly vulgar music in his or her work and elevate it. The back up women add a rich texture to most of the songs and Dylan is already famous for his inept production-- it is almost a signature of his.

The problems lie deeper. Dylan obviously can still invent fascinating new ways to communicate. He can still move his listeners tremendously, creating an obscure mystical bond between himself and his audience which is compelling in its force.

What is wrong is that Dylan is still harping on the same old themes: He is lonely, he is miserable, he is trapped, he hurts etc., etc., etc. The answers are "still blowin' in the wind," never within reach.

This is an easy stance to identify with. What person has never longed for someone to "understand my pain?" Who hasn't wondered "how long are we gonna be ridin'?" at some point? The songs are powerful and evocative because they drive into that universal chord of pain and suffering that is part of life. Yet, one wonders if Dylan will ever complete his Journey Through Dark Heat and finally emerge whole and cured. There is something unutterably sad about Dylan, something that evokes pity and the disgust which always follows it. He has allowed his idealistic and angry dreams of freedom to degenerate into a fatalistic prison in which he almost literally cannot see beyond his own nose.

He is trapped into the archaic romantic vision of being a man who desires a woman who will "cook and sew" for him and yet understand all of his complexities. This "total woman" eludes him simply because she does not exist. She is supposed to be his twin and at the same time his prisoner, someone "who will die for him and more," tending his fires at home while he is free to feed his wanderlust. When she turns into a witchy Lucifer, he finds a New Pony instead of understanding that he himself has broken her spirit forcing her into revenge. He is also doomed to keep on repeating the same scenario as long as he traps his women in gilded cages. A women who is not free either will not understand his need for freedom or will eventually strike back. There is no resolution to the paradox of a twin who is his servant.

While demanding complete trust from her he questions her every motive: "Do you love me?/Or are you just extending good will?" He should ask; "is my love in vain?"

Senor (Tales of Yankee Power) typifies Dylan's state of mind. His immersion in self-doubt is exposed with painfully stark intensity. The lines sear through the soul of the listener taking one into an almost primordal state of chaos. He's not sure where he's been and the choices ahead are equally frightening-Lincoln County Road (the site where Pat Garrett killed Billy the Kid) or Armageddon. He looks for comfort with his "eyes glued to the door," never realizing that he lacks the courage to open it himself. Instead of seeking a positive alternative, he slips into a time warp, like Vonnegut's hapless Billy Pilgrim, back to the Holocaust and identifies himself with a victim being herded to a gas chamber. Even in this role he cannot feel compassion for the "trainload of fools bogged down in a magnetic field" who are unaware of their own impending death. He will not accept the reality of the situation; the gypsy "with a broken flag and a flashing ring," must be the one to warn, "son this ain't a dream no more/it's the real thing." On and on he travels in this nightmare, back to the present where Neo-Nazis with hearts "still as hard as leather" still threaten him. He never realized that, unlike those poor souls who were killed in the Holocaust, he is free to resist and fight. He does not need the omnipotent Senor to assist him.

Pain is till his central driving force; it is literally and figuratively his bread and butter. He thrives on it. This is not to deny that he has been through some pretty bad traumas recently. It is to say that he refuses to try to heal himself. Only he can break through from the kind of nihilistic world where he must cry, "I'm an exile/you can't convert me." He has lost the ability to separate spirit from form, will from desire. Is it any wonder that he told Jonathan Cott in the Rolling Stone interview that he cannot be sure he is a Jew because his eyes are blue since Cossacks cruelly raped his ancestors? Whatever happened to his healthy iconoclasm?

This freedom of thought from static images has given way to an ugly kind of rigidity and fatalism that led to the very devastations that he always rebelled against. Dylan has not become Establishment because he made money or because he is over 30. He has become part of the System because he now thinks in its terms; i.e. women cannot be loved unless they serve men, people's beliefs are determined by their racial types...

A Changing ot the Guards will not bring the peace and tranquility he envisions; they will only impose a new order over the old one. As long as his emotional guards (symbolic of his paranoias) merely change, he will still be trapped. He may mutate, but cannot change intrinsically until he dismisses the guards.

The only somewhat hopeful song on Street Legal is "Baby Stop Crying." Here he does make an effort to comfort a wounded woman. Yet, he asks her to stop crying because it bothers him. His conclusion is vague and weak; "you know/I know/The sun will always shine." So will the rain fall. He tells her to "stop trying" instead of encouraging her to continue her battle and renew herself. His desire to help her is sincere, but he lacks the inner resources to even rescue himself, let alone assist her.

Those who seek catharsis will find Street Legal an excellent mediom for it. Catharsis, of course, has value, but when it fails to clear a path through suffering and pain so that one can begin to heal oneself, it becomes wasted. Those who think that Dylan's answers are somehow cyrptically hidden in the songs are mistaken. The answers are not hidden in the songs; they are hidden within Dylan by Dylan.

Dylan should take the time "to think."

--Billie Mudry

Joan Baez

We haven't heard from Joan Baez, the grand damme of protest singers. Other than an appearance in Renaldo and Clara and a few attempts at making her music commercial and shedding the "Sixties" image she had (which generally just resulted in her looking silly wearing an aviators uniform and goggles on BLOWIN AWAY), she has just been floundering. Clearly she is trying to get away from the reputation she had in the Sixties. Whether she cares to the part of the Eighties isn't discernable, yet.

Phil Ochs

Phil Ochs was a folksinger who sang in protest marches, sit-ins, and rallies. He accompanied himself on the acoustic guitar. His songs were topical songs, as he'd like to call them.

That simple description cannot do him justice, however. In his simplicity, he was endearing. In his sincerity, his belief that by writing a "protest" song, he could change things, he was sublime. Although the songs lacked the complicated chord arrangements and musical experimentation of the man who dwarfed him, Dylan, I can easily make a case for Phil Ochs as being a superior force. His songs (unlike Dylan's) were accessible and sincere, always honest, always Phil (never ghastly, layers of personae like Dylan). They were ironic and bitter at times. And even though they are dated, they stand up well. I played his OUTSIDE OF A SMALL CIRCLE OF FRIENDS the other day, and it seemed perfectly applicable to 1979:

Look outside the window
There's a woman being grabbed
They've dragged her to the bushes
Now she's being stabbed
Maybe we should call the cops
And try to stop the pain
But Monopoly is so much fun
I'd hate to blow the game
And I'm sure it wouldn't interest anybody
Outside of a small circle of friends

I'm riding down the highway
And my back is getting stiff
Thirteen cars are piled up
They're hanging from a cliff
Maybe we should pull them back
With our towing chain
But we gotta move, and we might get sued
And it looks like it's gonna rain

Smoking marijuana is more fun than drinking beer
But a friend of ours was captured
And they gave him thirty years
Maybe we should raise our voices
Ask somebody why
But demonstrations are a drag
Besides, we're much too high
And I'm sure it wouldn't interest anybody
Outside of a small circle of friends.

Phil loved movies. He thought of life as a movie, and every event in it as a scene. He loved being a part of history. He always had magazines and newspapers tucked under his arms, and dozens of little notebooks, in which he was constantly writing his observations, and ideas for songs.

As the spirit of the Sixties began to dissipate, Phil began to worry about his health. His talent, his voice. When the 70's could no longer sustain him, when he

felt he was no longer needed, he committed suicide. He hanged himself on April 4, 1976. Ramsey Clark said this about Phil's death: "Phil Ochs cared. He cared about justice. He didn't like to see suffering. When miners in Kentucky needed help, Phil Ochs was there. When a hurricane struck Florida, he tried to help those who needed help. All through the civil rights days, the noblest quest of the American people in our time, the quest for equality, Phil sang and inspired others. The war darkened. Phil lightened our hearts, but steeled our purpose. Phil needed help at the end. As a friend, I knew that. I tried to help him. But you and I have to ask ourselves this: how is it that such a driven person, a genius, a caring, loving, giving person. How is that a person with all those qualities couldn't find the help he needed in America? Is it because we weren't as caring, as driven, as committed as him?

On May 30, 1976, a number of Phil's friends performed and spoke at a concert at the Felt Forum in New York. This concert was filmed, and highlights of it were shown on a PBS special called the PHIL OCHS MEMORIAL CELEBRATION, in 1977. It is still being shown periodically. I cried seeing it (the only time I remember crying over something on television).

Tom Paxton

Tom Paxton writes songs, folk songs, topical songs, like Phil. He is under contract now with Vanguard Records. He is a survivor. His albums NEW SONGS FROM THE BRIARPATCH (1977) and HEROES (1978) had songs about Ron Kovic, capital punishment, Stephen Biko, political totalitarianism, the hunger problem, Anita Bryant ("You squeeze mine, Anita, I'll squeeze yours"). Still there is no way he's a 60's nostalgia act. There is no way he is self-righteous preachy, or strident. His songs are funny and ironic; masked in a folky, sing-along format, they are powerful (His song, "Born on the Fourthof July" about Ron Kovic is as powerful a song as anyone wrote about the war in the 60's) I can't rave enough about Tom.

Hunt down his albums, see him in concert. Few performers can make you feel warm inside: Tom can. After attending one of his concerts, he feels like your friend.

Tom Paxton is one survivor (perhaps the only one) who is going strong today. His child-like spontaneity, humor, and humanity is still there.

Jerry Rubin

Jerry Rubin is mining the field of self awareness. Along with his new wife, the rich socialite Mimi Leonard, Jerry sponsored "The Event" an all day program of speakers featuring Masters and Johnson, Bucky Fuller, Dick Gregory, Wayne Dyer, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Warner Erhard of EST who, in character, was supposed to talk about love, and babbled on incoherently about something only Werner really knows. Jerry has called Werner "one of the greatest men alive."

The tickets for the event went for $32-$65. Nothing like sponsoring an event for the "people."

Jerry spoke at Rutgers in November 1978 (he's on tour with a lecture program that features him reminiscing about the 60's, then explaining why they died out) and said that our energies must be focused on self-awareness not political involvement.

Jerry has always been a media opportunist, wanting to be in the limelight. Although it is not too clear whether Jerry is that dedicated, or just anxious to cash in on current trends, much of what he says is surprisingly valid, and he appeared sincere. At 40, he has survived the 60's well. He should bear watching.

Timothy Leary

Touting himself with the label of "evolutionary agent", smiling like an ESTy, Timothy Leary spoke at Rutgers (he's on tour) in Oct. Bounding on stage in a space suit that looked like a reject from SPACE:1999, he babbled on and showed slides of space stations and colonies in space--his answer to problems on Earth ("if we go into space, all our problems will be left behind"--wanna bet?). Gesturing and enunciating like an evangelist selling Bibles, he said little to defend or explain his ideas.

Dr. Leary became notorious for taking LSD at Harvard. He is now exploring the final frontier by travelling in rockets this time--on a whole, he is making just as much sense as when he took LSD.

Abbie Hoffman

Abbie Hoffman, along with Jerry Rubin, was a defendant in the Chicago Trial in 1968, the pivotal event of the Sixties. Abbie was the class clown of the 60's, always playing pranks, always making jokes.

Abbie went "underground" in 1974, to avoid a cocaine charge and imprisonment. A concert was held in New York City recently at the Felt Forum to raise money to "Bring Abbie Home."

Since going underground, Abbie has had plastic surgery. He is irritated because everyone thinks that is a joke: "The plastic surgeon who did my job is Dr. Eddie Kantor in Los Angeles, one of the best in the whole damn country. I told him I was the host of a Howdy Doody Show on Canadian Tv, he had no idea who I was. I told him I was afraid I'd lose my following since I was looking too old. I made sure that Dr. Kantor used Demerol--It blocks pain, not consciousness. The greatest fear of a person in my situation is being unconscious. You'd have no control over what you say."

Abbie is working on an autobiography, SOON TO BE A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE, from his birth to right after he emerges from plastic surgery. His publisher is Grosset and Dunlap, who published Nixon's book. He is just about finished now, and will hand the manuscript in soon.

Does he have plans to resurface? "Just today a terrific solution hit me. Look, Keith Richards just got a great sentence. He has to give a free concert for the blind. I'm willing to turn myself in if the judge agrees to give me a similar deal--I'll go on tour, Coast to Coast, and sing to the deaf." Thankfully, Abbie hasn't changed.

In the January 1979 issue of FEATURE (formerly CRAWDADDY), Abbie pleaded his case: "I was wrong. I'm sorry and I want to come home. I was wrong to tell kids to kill their parents. It was the children's fault. Spoiled, selfish brats made the 60's. We encouraged kids to leave home. Forgive me, mother. I love Jesus, the smooth arch of his back, his long blonde curls. Jesus died for us all, even us Jews. Lord, I love Israel as protector of western civilization. Most of my thinking was the result of brainwashing by KGB agents. The FBI was right; the KGB gave us money as well as training. We met regularly at the Cuban mission to the UN.

Once I burned money at the Stock Exchange. This was wrong. People work hard to make money. Even stockbrokers work hard. No one works hard in Bangladesh--that's why they are starving and we are not. With inflation everyone works extra hard for their money.

Long ago I worked for the Negro cause. It was fashionable. We meant well but got carried away. They love their neighborhoods so much there are crowds waiting to get in. Buses are an affront to all people no matter what the color of their skin. If blacks don't love America ,their ancestors shouldn't have been so anxious to come here. It's not our fault they chained themselves to ships and ended up in America. At least they could have taken the time to learn English! We are all equal, but the beauty of democracy is in having so many different choices. We can all go our separate ways, equally; black and white, male and female, rich and poor, healthy and sick.

Our system of democracy is the best in the world. I don't know much about other systems in the world, but if you pick up the newspaper or turn on the TV all the others seem to be falling apart. Good governments don't fall apart so easily. South Africa's has been there for 300 years. Don't get me wrong; they're not perfect. They work hard enough, but they should be nicer to their blacks, especially those who behave. I believe what Henry Ford said: "Change takes time." Another 300 years is not too long to wait for peaceful change.

Homosexuals live in sin. It says so in the Bible. ANyone who ever took the time to have a heart-to-heart talk with one of those sorry victims of our permissive society has heard the pain they've been trying to express. What every homo needs is a good shoulder to cry on. In the meantime, they should be kept away from our children--children easily influenced by New Yorkers. I love New York as much as anybody. I certainly admire the ambition that's got those big buildings off the ground. It's amazing how New Yorkers can eat while they walk, but they do have strange notions. That's because the UN is in New York and the good people there are subjected to foreign ideas. If the UN was in Salt Lake City, if Puerto Ricans flooded Utah to get rich quick in welfare schemes, and if homos owned all the movie theaters and barber shops there, you couldn't expect anything different.

I've grown up. You know how it is when you're young and not in control. I'd like to go back to school and learn how to be a credit to the community.

Now can I come back?"

(c) 1978 Feature Publ.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dead.

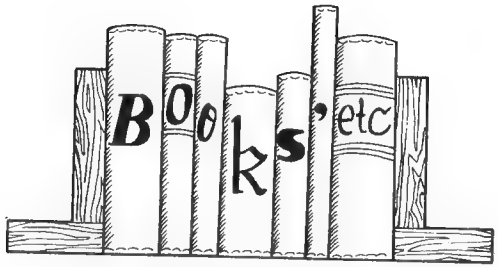
Lenny Bruce

Dead.

JANUARY 10, 1979, ENTRY 2.

I got a call from someone very important today. It was Mr. Rupert Peach, president of the Cervox Corporation. The company owns tv stations, movie studios, newspapers, magazines, and untold numbers of people's lives. Get this--he offered to buy out AFTA. He would pay all my debts. If I say yes to him, it means all my problems would be solved. I would never have to come begging to you for money. I could worry about the magazine and its contents. But, too, I would no longer be in complete control. Peach says I can do what I want and he will only "suggest" ideas to me. But I am suspicious.

I turned him down. To me, Peach and his kind, the conglomerates who own quick food chains and oil companies stand in opposition to everthing which I love. The unique, the surprising, the cheap, the trivial, the tiny, the exciting. Peach infects his products with a leprosy of commercialism--the end result is blandness, a string of inane, and pointless articles in newspapers like his NATIONAL MIND. Have you seen that? It's the new newspaper sold in supermarkets with color covers of Farrah Fawcett and John Travolta. Housewives of bloated bodies and minds eat up the cheap gossip and lies every week like junk food of the mind. I would not want AFTA that close on the rack to the NATIONAL MIND. I'm sorry. I wonder why he called me in the first place.



Book News/Reviews

BOOK NEWS--
SEPARATING, will be an NBC tv-movie dramatising stories by John Updike, Michael Moriarty, Kathryn Walker, Blythe Danner star.

PBS will have a two-hour documentary about novelist William Faulker. Jill Faulkner Summers (his daughter), Lauren Bacall, and Robert Penn Warren appear.

Master's and Johnson will soon release their study on homosexuality. They also promise a look at a new sexual classification, the "ambisexual."

Norman Mailer's nonfiction study of violence in America, called THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG will be released soon. It will focus on the Gary Gilmore case.

Joseph Heller will release his new book GOOD AS GOLD, in March 1979, from Simon & Schuster. It's about a third rate intellectual who becomes a foreign diplomat (Henry K?)

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GRAVITY'S RAINBOW oy Thomas Pynchon

It's 1979 and Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow looks increasingly like the finest novel of the decade. It is a novel that seems at odds with itself; at once burlesque yet deeply sweeping yet specific; howlingly comic yet darkly serious. It is a giant work with a surface of fantastic black humor, an underpinning of healthy doses of pop and counterculture, and a heart which breaks due to man's increasing loss of his essential humanness. While it's closest relative is probably Catch-22, another wartime black humor novel, Heller's book lacks the scope of Pynchon's daring examination of civilization in all its aspects.

A major difference in attitude between Gravity's Rainbow and other war novels is that Pynchon views war as merely a symptom of the true disease that eats away at man and society. It is simply another strand in a global conspiracy that aims to turn humanity into faceless, emotionless, machine-like beings. This conspiracy encompasses science, technology, religion, and every other structured panacea that man has ever devised.

Those not drawn to global conspiracies who are merely seeking a good time need not shun this book. Pynchon provides a continual stream of outrageous and uproarious characters in totally unlikely and hilarious settings. The action centers about American Lieutenant Tyrone Slothrop, on assignment in London but actually roaming the continent in the hectic days of early peace and occupation following World War II. Slothrop must come to grips with the staggering fact that he is sexually attracted to a rocket. And an enemy rocket at that! Follow the unfortunate Slothrop across the channel to the glittering and wicked Casino Herm' Goering; follow him down the toilet at Harvard; join him in pitched battle with Gligory the trained octopus. Meet his friends, like the loyal Tantivy Mucker-Maffick or Gel Tripping, the nubile apprentice witch. Hide from his enemies, like the sinister Teddy Bloat or Gerald Pointsman, Pavlovian gone mad. Deal with infamous Berlin doper Saure Bummer. Best of all, watch as the timid Slothrop changes to Rocketman who fights injustice, falls over his cape, and manages to score some good Nepalese hash. Read the most uproarious and telling evaluation of our society since Darwin. Read GRAVITY'S RAINBOW and find out who your real enemies are.

--Harvey Levine

SOMETHING HAPPENED by Joseph Heller. a Ballantine paperback (345-24575-X-225) 530 pages, 1974.

SOMETHING HAPPENED is the story of a man in limbo--in particular, Bob Slocum, Joseph Heller's middle-class archtype and model for the 1970's man. Bob Slocum has everything he could wish for--a stable position in the sales department of the company (where everyone is afraid of everyone else), a faithful, if not loving wife, a daughter (who is 12 years old, insecure in her approaching adolescence, and self-hating), a son (who is quiet, vulnerable, and not doing well in gym. "I help him," Forgoine (the gym teacher) maintains. "I try to encourage him, Mr. Slocum. I try to give him the will to win. He don't have one. When he's ahead in one of the relay races do you know what he does? He starts laughing. He does that. And then slows down and waits for the other guys to catch up. Can you imagine? That's no way to run a race, Mr. Slocum. Would you say that's a way to run a race?") Then there's the other son, Derek, who no one talks about. ("It is not true that retarded (brain-damaged, idiot, feeble-minded, emotionally distrubed, autistic) children are the necessary favorites of their parents or that they are always uncommonly beautiful and lovable, for Derek, our youngest child, is not especially good-looking, and we do not love him at all. (We would prefer not to think about him. We don't want to talk about him)")

SOMETHING HAPPENED is a frighteningly on target black humor epic of middle-class America. It is about competition, about fear so subtle, but so potent, that it eats away at our hero, middle-aged executive Bob Slocum. Told in an electric, hypnotic first person style, which borders on being confessional (Chapter titles are "I get the willies", "There's no getting away from it" "My wife is unhappy" etc.), but is far too morbid and true (the dialogue between the father and daughter is some of the most realistic modern suburbial banter to ever see print). It grabs you right from the beginning, and for 530 excruciating pages, it never lets you go (the ending is bitter and explosive).

Bob Slocum is trapped--trapped in a world which he cannot understand (although we begin to see his problem before he does). The company, his wife, his daughter, his responsibilities all bear down on him (much in the same way the military bureaucracy bears down on the characters of CATCH-22, Joseph Heller's only other novel in his 15 year career--but SOMETHING HAPPENED is not as funny as book as CATCH-22). He says, "Who am I? I think I am beginning to find out. I am a stick: I am a broken waterlogged branch floating with my own crowd in this one nation of ours, indivisible (unfortunately) under God, with liberty and justice for all of those who are speedy enough to sieze them first and hog them away from the rest. Some melting pot. If all of us in this vast, fabulous land of ours could come together and take time to exchange a few words, they would be "Bastard" "Wop" "Nigger" "Whitey" "Kike" "Spic". I don't like people who run things. If I were poor, I believe I might want to overthrow the government by force. I'm very glad, however, that everyone poor isn't trying to overthrow the government, because I'm not poor. I don't know why every Negro maid doesn't steal from her white employer (but I'm glad our Negro maid doesn't or at least has not let us find out she does). If I were black and poor, I don't think I'd have any reason for obeying any law other than the risk of being caught. As it is, though, I'm glad colored people do obey the law (most of them anyway), but I am afraid of Negroes and have moved away from them. I am afraid of cops. But I'm glad there are cops and wish there were more. I don't like cops. Except when they're around to protect me. "

As Slocum tells us on the first page, "Something must have happened to me sometime" We are invited to guess and reguess what it could have been. Somewhere he got caught up, grew up, and couldn't get out of the American dream. He feels the most sympathy for his son who refuses to compete. The answer might be that he has lost his sense of being a child, living in a changeable and surprising world. Slocum's world is one of fear, anxiety, and worry. He knows that at one time sex used to be fun (like when he was 17 and teased by Virginia at the insurance company). Nothing in his present life holds anything but despair. Talking about his relationship with his wife, he says, "What happened to us? Something did. I was a boy once, and she was a girl, and we were both new. Now we are man and woman, and nothing feels new any longer; everything feels old. I think we liked each other once. I think we used to have fun." At another point, Slocum confesses, "When I grow up I want to be a little boy."

Slocum never achieves this. At the end of the novel, he fires Martha, who works as a typist, and is "slowly going crazy" (Her name is Martha. Our biggest fear is that she will go crazy on a weekday between nine and five. We hope she'll go crazy on a weekend, when we aren't with her. Somebody should fire her; nobody will. Even Green, who actually enjoys firing people, recoils from the responsibility of making the move that might bring about her shattering collapse, although he cannot stand her, detests the way she looks, and is infuriated by every reminder that she still exists in his department...We watch her and wait, and pussyfoot past, and wonder to ourselves how much more time must elapse before she comes on schedule to that last, decisive second in which she finally does go insane--shrieking or numb, clawing wildly or serene, comprehending intelligently that she has now gone mad and must therefore be taken away, or terrified, ignorant, and confused...Oddly, she is much happier at her job than the rest of us. Her mind wanders from her work to more satisfying places, and she smiles and whispers contentedly to herself as she gazes out over her typewriter roller at the blank wall only a foot or two in front of her face, forgetting what or where she is and the page she is supposed to be copying...The head of Personnel does not want to fire her either and has contacted her family in Iowa. Her mother has married again and doesn't want her back. Martha has bad skin. Everyone resents her and wishes she would go away) and the last line of the novel is "Everyone is surprised at the way I've taken command." But it is a pessimistic ending. He has become part of the system, exterminated his fear--but it is a hollow victory at best.

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EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES by Tom Robbins. a Bantam paperback (0-553-10176-1-225) 416 pages, 1976.

EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES is a playful, funny, warm, and loving book about Sissy Hankshaw, whose deformity (enlarged thumbs) becomes the focal point in this novel, which is packed full of outrageous characters and situations.

There are no villains or enemies here. It is easy to laugh at and love the characters at the cowgirl ranch (Tom Robbins, a male writer, manages to delineate truly memorable female characters the kind of which feminists have been asking for all this time, but does not write them as models of the "perfectly feminist ideal"--he's too smart for that).

The book is about normalcy, and Robbins enters into the narrative often (interrupting the story with his philosophy and comments and even writing and even writing himself in as a psychiatrist, Dr. Robbins) to admonish

books CONTINUED

the characters "Don't be outraged, be outrageous"

COWGIRLS is a beautiful celebration of life, the charm and humor here is not at all deadly, but playful. Robbins says "Life is essentially playful. But it plays rough at time. Like a baby gorilla, it doesn't know its own strength."

Robbins admonishes us to expand our perceptions, to stretch the world to its limits. How? Through our imagination, through our increased ability to play. "The author isn't altogether certain that there is any such thing as exaggeration. Our brains permit us to utilize such a wee fraction of their resources that, in a sense, everything we experience is a reduction. We employ drugs, yogic techniques and poetics--and a thousand more clumsy methods--in an effort just to bring things back to normal."

The characters go through a number of troubles and obstacles (like when the cowgirls try to help the whooping cranes who have migrated to the ranch and are descended upon by the media and government), but Robbins is never tragic or reductionist about the limitations of life. "Perhaps a person gains by accumulating obstacles. The more obstacles set up to prevent happiness from appearing, the greater the shock when it does appear, just as the rebound of a spring will be all the more powerful the greater the pressure that has been exerted to compress it. Care must be taken, however, to select large obstacles, for only those of sufficient scope and scale have the capacity to lift us out of context and force life to appear in an entirely new and unexpected light. For example should you litter the floor and table tops of your room with small objects, they constitute little more than a nuisance, an inconvenient clutter that frustrates you and leaves you irritable: the petty is mean. Should you, on the other hand, encounter in your room a nine-thousand-pound granite boulder, the surprise it evokes, the extreme steps that must be taken to deal with it, compel you to see it with new eyes. And if the boulder is more special, if it has been painted or carved in some mysterious way, you may find that it possesses an extraordinary and supernatural presence that enchants you, and in coping with it--leaves you feeling extraordinary and supernatural, too. Difficulties illuminate existence, but they must be fresh and of high quality."

Robbins encourages us, through COWGIRLS, to take risks. As Dr. Robbins the psychiatrist, he explains his goal: "I soon learned that man is stuck with a lot of conflicting behavioral and emotional traits that have a genetic basis. We have built-in contradictions, they're standard equipment on all models. For eons of evolutionary time, our DNA has been whispering into the ears of our cells that we are, each one of us, the most precious things in the universe and that any action that entails the slightest risk to us may have consequences of universal importance. 'Be careful, get comfortable, don't make any waves,' whispers the DNA. Conversely, the yearning for freedom, the risky belief that there is nothing to lose and nothing to gain is also in our DNA. But the desire for security, the will to survive is of much greater antiquity.

"To live fully, one must be free. But to be free, one must give up security. Therefore to live one must be ready to die. How's that for a paradox? But since the genetic bent for freedom is comparatively recent, it may represent an evolutionary trend. We may yet outgrow our overriding obsession to survive. That's why I encourage everyone to take chances, to court danger, to welcome anxiety, to flaunt insecurity, to rock every boat and always cut against the grain. By pushing it, goosing it along whenever possible, we may speed up the process, the process by which the need for playfulness and liberty become stronger than the need for comfort and security. " The characters, playful and dazzling, in EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES, do just that.

JANUARY 12, 1979, ENTRY 3.

Los Angeles. Some call it the city of Angels. Well, this isn't Los Angeles. It's Wharton, which isn't called anything.

The night spreads itself over Crater Avenue, like a cheap whore. Bill-Dale Marcinko, hack editor, is hunched over his typewriter, pounding out his sordid fantasies and cheap dreams on an IBM Correcting Selectric which he rented for $52.50. It is 2:00 a.m. Suddenly, the phone rings... BRIINNNG!

Bill-Dale wearily reaches for it. The smell of cheap cherry cola fills the room.

"Hello?"

"Yeah, you Marcinko?" The voice sounded like the whiskers on a down-and-out bum. "Names Merkle, Ted Merkle. I'm a private dick. Got a phone call from a mysterious friend of yours and an envelope with 5 C-Notes says I find out who beat you up in July. Meet me at the Townsquare Shopping Mall, outside of Bambergers, in five minutes."

"What? Who--"

--Click--

Wharton. The town turns its scarred underbelly upwards at night. Bill-Dale drives through the clean, well-lit streets. The suburbial homes with their neatly trimmed lawns. He sees no pimps, no hookers, no two-bit bums who are trying to pump a Mafia boss dry by blackmail. There are none of these types in Wharton. Everyone has gone to sleep by 9:30, anyway.

The mall has plenty of parking. Bill-Dale drives up alongside a man in a wrinkled corderoy suit (slept in obviously) leaning against the "B" in Bambergers. A cigarette hangs wearily from his lip.

The man says, "You the writer fellow?"

"Are you Mr. Murdoch?"

"It's Merkle, kid. Can I get in?"

"Sure." Bill-Dale leans over and unlocks the passenger door. "What is this all--"

"Just drive," Merkle growled. "Around the parking lot." Bill-Dale drove and drove.

"First," Merkle began, "you're too gullible. Guy calls you on the phone, tells you to meet him in five minutes, you come here like a lamb, pull up along side me, and

HEY, IT'S THE CALCULATOR KID...
WHICH BUTTON WIPES YOUR NOSE FOR YOU, KID?
HEY, NERD... CAN IT SOLVE YOUR ACNE PROBLEM?
J. HERBIRK AND THE SCREAMING

open the door. Didn't check me out--no good, kid. I could have been the fellow that hit you in July, giving you the sequel to it."

"You know, Ted, smoking's bad for your health, I just read in the newspaper where.." The interior of the car was fogged up with cigarette smoke.

"Just a lesson. You gotta be careful. You're a lamb in a pack of wolves. Look: I read AFTA, and I really like you. Ya remind me of my kid brother Mike who got mowed down by the mob in Elmira. I don't wanna see you hurt. I read the police report. You just walked out onto your front porch when the guys gave you a story about wanting to contribute to AFTA."

"I never thought..."

"Hey, Billy, can I call you that..."

"Sure."

"Waiter down at the Dew Drop Inn was named Billy. Young guy, like you. Went to Vietnam and came home in a glad bag."

"I'm sorry." Bill-Dale was still driving in circles in the mall parking lot.

"Don't be kid, life's like that." Merkle threw his cigarette butt out the window. It hit the pavement and sparks flew up like Fourth of July fireworks. "Have a philosophy, Billy," Merkle continued. "Says that acts of violence are visited on the good to test their integrity. You got integrity, you got guts, too, and somebody's got to keep you around for a couple of years. Guys like me, I guess, we're around just to keep guys like you alive and kicking. Me, I don't have any friends. My friend is a .38. Women--they're all bitches, you know."

Bill-Dale looked at the crumpled man next to him. "You seem like a really nice guy. You could have plenty of friends. Gee, golly, I like you and I just met you."

"I think God is a spiteful woman. Giving fat wallets and big cars to the weak, the scum. Kicking guys like you and me in the nuts. Right here."

"TED! Whoooaaa--- I get your point. What I would like to know is who sent you..."

"I gotta keep my trap shut on dat. Part of the bargain. I get expenses and you get the names of the guys who jumped ya."

"I really don't want revenge," Bill-Dale said quietly.

"Look, in a world like this, where bodies fall without regard to sub-plot continuity the least you can do is preserve the illusion of justice. You gotta have something to grab onto..."

"TED! If you're going to start that again, I'll let you out right now..."

★★★

DIARY ENTRY

JANUARY 15, 1979, ENTRY 4.[MORNING THOUGHTS]

We, as Americans, are the most intellectaully and culturally mobile people on this planet. Because of that freedom and mobility, we may have also learned to be the most lonely. We can beam our images and voices thousands of miles. We can preserve our words and images for thousands of years. BUT can we look the person next to us in the eyes and tell him what we are feeling, begin even to UNDERSTAND it? We have learned to create and destroy every element and compound at the base of all animate and inanimate objects. But have we ever learned to love? We must stand up for the right of human dignity, the right to love. We must stand up for the intangible and private things. We must want to love--to want it so bad that it rips through our lives and destroys the old ways of thinking. Love can change things.

We have the power to change America for the better. How? By CHANGING THE QUALITY OF OUR INDIVIDUAL THOUGHTS. Replacing the negative assumptions about man (like MAN IS EVIL, MAN IS BORN SINFUL) with positive ones. The destire to do evil is a learned one. The students are those people hopeless and helpless enough to consider violence and pain as alternative choices.

Religion, school, and other institutions of our time which seek to preserve a status quo will tell you "That's the way you were born" if there is something in you you want to change. I'm just lazy by nature. I'm just shy by nature. Bull. Oh, man, so much bull shit, and ignorancy. The psychologist John Watson said "Give me a baby at birth, and by controlling his enviroment, I can give you a doctor, a lawyer, the President of the United States, or even, a murderer or criminal."

Let us start believing in our power to change things. We can feel what we want to feel. There is no reason to feel sad for one second, my friend. By changing our thoughts, we change our feelings, by changing our feelings, we change our actions. As our actions and enviroment improves, our thoughts improve. Pretty soon we are on our way to what we want to be.

We've got to stop and re-think the crazy thoughts we have programmed ourselves with. We are too lazy to re-think and re-love. But it must be done. I am dedicating my life to changing the tenor of feelings on this planet (it sure beats accountancy). Will you join me? It's the 80's--time's slipping...

DIARY ENTRY

JANUARY 15, 1979, ENTRY 4.[EVENING THOUGHTS]

You know, how in dreams, when you are trying to run, and your feet just don't move?

I'm getting hopeful and charged up with my dreams of utopia--my friends just get bored. I can't get through to them.

I am losing friends rapidly. In their place are petty people--people who want to prove that I'm wrong, humiliate me, find the inconsistencies in my actions and thoughts (I have never said I am not subject to change) and attack me.

There are a group of enemies, real enemies (I have never had enemies before-I don't know how to react--do I invite them over for pizza--do I send them Christmas cards?), people who beat me up, people who send me threatening letters like "Die, you faggot," in frightening, shaky letters, large and in pencil. People who think I'm dumb or evil, people who just want me out of the way to appease their personal ills.

Everyone tells me I must conceive of people the way they are--with a capacity for evil, for cruelty. I want everyone to be my friend. I perceive everyone in terms of What They Have The Potential Of Becoming.

I don't have any friends. Things are fine for awhile, as long as I behave in a conventional way. As soon as I talk to them of change (mine, theirs, the "friendship's"), I get dumped. Once I figured out the average life of my friendships. 13 weeks. The same as a tv sit com. Except, do you know, they are cancelling the shows sooner now? I suspect that is happening to me.

I am lonely. I have a vision. I cannot find anyone who has the same vision, the same way of looking at life as filled with magic and power and rock and roll. I am lonely. I despise the ideas I have, the desire for change which causes people to resent me. I resent I was born the way I am (or did I make myself this way?)--with egalitarian drives. I want to be selfish and stupid.

Did you ever bite down on a piece of raw iron? Do you remember the taste--cold, metallic, hollow-tasting. Sometimes when I'm alone at night, alone with my God-damn idealism and dreams, I want to reach over and know that there is someone there; to have the taste in my mouth filled with pepperoni pizza or cherry cola or a kiss.

Today I considered the possibility that I may be going crazy. Can a person rationally ponder the evidence, and calmly decide that he has lost his mind? Do I send little notes, like the ones you buy in the stationery store, to all my relatives and friends? "Dear Aunt Julia, I have lost control of my mind. I can no longer be responsible for my actions. How is Uncle Bob? Love, Bill-Dale."

I can't go on.

LONG AFTER MIDNIGHT by Ray Bradbury
Bantam paperback, 1978.

Stories by Ray Bradbury are fresh and fanciful descriptions of youth, beauty, and nostalgia. Vivid imagery is interlaced with mood and atmosphere to create sensuous, profound revelations.

As a storyteller, Bradbury is quite efficient; however, his plotting is not without weaknesses. Often, his conceptualizations of theme and content are paper-thin--uneventful or simplistic. He, himself, admits lack of proficiency--at least in terms of scientific background (often an ingredient in good futuristic tales.) Unfortunately, Bradbury has never had filmed, or staged, any major short story or novel (with exceptions like THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (a play) and THE ILLUSTRATED MAN (a low-budget flick)). (This of course, will change. See 19-INCH DREAMS news section. --Bill-Dale)

Bradbury has continued to create sharp, breath-taking glimpses of a reality only seen in dreams--or perhaps the womb. The stories in LONG AFTER MIDNIGHT are written primarily with a sense of gratefulness, and appreciation--for life.

As a writer, Bradbury can touch even the coldest among us. Too bad he's not a pill--he'd make a great anti-depressant.

--John DiPrete

THE AMITYVILLE HORROR by Jay Anson.

Billed as a true story (it isn't--only about 25% of what happens in the book actually did happen, according to official investigators of the case), this modern day haunted house thriller functions by the successive accumulation of bizarre events, some of them chilling, some of them absolutely silly (the black toilet bowl, for instance).

A good dose of thrills, executed well in a kind of psuedo documentary/journalist style, this book is currently being filmed as a movie, script by Sandor Stern, directed by Stuart Rosenburg, and starring James Brolin, Margot Kidder, Rod Steiger, and Murray Hamilton. Lalo Schifrin will score the film, which opens July 27, 1979 for a minimum 8 week run. Since the book is full of vivid visual horror, the film, tightly directed and sporting professional special effects, should be something to watch for.

TWINS by Bari Wood & Jack Geasland.
Signet paperback, 451-E8015.
343 pages, 1977.

The story of two identical twins who establish a strange bond between each other, and have a crisis of identity, all making for an excellent horror novel.

The horror here rests not in any supernatural menace, but in the perverse bond between the twins as they share each other's lives. The bond starts to slip as the drift away from each other and begin to develop different personalities, almost bordering on a kind of yin/yang bond.

The writing by Wood & Geasland is very good; the plot and storyline is handled in a very original fashion. Recommended.

Let Us Now Praise Stephen King

Stephen King's novel CARRIE was adapted to film by Brian DePalma. In some way, all of his other work is now being developed for other media.

'SALEM'S LOT at this point is in limbo, last being discussed as a tv-movie. George Romero was supposed to direct it, through Warner Bros. (Stephen King was very happy about this, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD being one of his favorite movies), but according to the Dec. 1 interview with George Romero, he no longer has that option. It is back now as a mini-series for tv. King has misgivings about doing tv, merely because many of the gory or intense scenes in 'SALEM'S LOT which are so integral to the novel won't be allowed to be dramatized on tv.

THE SHINING completed pre-production in October 1978, and began filming under Stanley Kubrick, who is producer/writer/director. Stephen has no control over the screenplay. The cast stars Jack Nicholson, Shelly Duvall and Scatman Crothers. Warner Bros. will release the $13 million extravaganza Christmas 1979. Stanley Kubrick spoke with King and told him that it was always a secret passion of his to try to make the "most frightening" film ever. Kubrick has changed the ending of the book. It is rumored he commissioned a replica of Jack Nicholson's head, designed to split open and spill out worms. The hedge sculptures will not come to life as in the book; Kubrick has instead constructed a hedge maze which will play a major role in the film and be the setting for the new ending which no one can find out anything about. The REDRUM concept has been thrown out. The scenes with the dead woman in Room 217 and Danny's playmate Tony will be included. Kubrick is importing Garrett Brown, inventor of the Steadicam (which makes steady pans and tilts possible from a hand-held camera, using a gyroscopic technique) to assist cinematographer John Alcott. Make up will be by Tom Smith.

NIGHT SHIFT, the collection of short stories, will be adapted to tv, via a tv-movie pilot for NBC, and to film, via three stories for Milt Subotsky. NBC and Twentieth Century Fox will film a 90-minute anthology pilot for a possible series, screenplay by King, based on three stories in NIGHT SHIFT "Strawberry Spring" "Battleground" and "I Know What You Need". They will take place all in the same New England town. They will use the NIGHT SHIFT introduction as an opening intro for the movie, but (as rumored earlier) King will not be the host. NBC has the right to the title "Night Shift", where Subotsky does not. Milton Subotsky will adapt 3 of the machine-oriented stories for a film. No other news on that, except Stephen sold the option to him for $500 AND a good amount of creative control over the final product.

Stephen has written a screenplay for a tv-movie, based on the "Children of the Corn" story in NIGHT SHIFT. No word on it.

King is also working on an original screenplay about a haunted radio station. The owner of a radio station in Western Maine fires all the disc jockeys and replaces them with a computer device, with the syrupy, mechanical voice, and the machine takes over saying things like "And now the latest from...blah blah blah...and fuck you, you're going to die; I'm going to kill you. I'm having a good time writing it," King said.

Stephen King also adapted Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, but Bradbury picked up the option on it, and wrote a screenplay himself, if it ever surfaces.

Paul Monash, producer of CARRIE, has the rights to THE STAND, and will probably work it up into a theatrical film.

Stephen is working on a new novel, which will be released very soon, called THE DEAD ZONE, a "psychic thriller" with a "top-secret plot twist."

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Stephen King, once upon a time, used to read EC comics, listen to rock 'n' roll, and watch horror films like INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, CURSE OF THE DEMON, and CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (his favorites). He even published an sf fanzine with our own Marv Wolfman.

Today, amidst a glutted market of EXORCIST rip-offs, and pseudo-gothic romances, his horror books are the finest literature of that genre in modern times.

Stephen's gift in telling a story, and creating an interesting plot to begin with is unparalleled. CARRIE was about an adolescent girl's psychic revenge, 'SALEM'S LOT about the takeover of a town by vampires, THE SHINING about a Colorado hotel which acts like a storage battery for psychic energy of all sorts, and THE STAND takes on nothing less (in 823 pages) than the end of the world and the battle between the forces of good and evil.

His skill is most apparent in his collection of short stories, NIGHT SHIFT (Doubleday hardcover, 0-385-12991-2, 336 pages, 1978). Now a Signet paperback.

What makes Stephen King good is the direct, economic language he uses to establish characterization. The rapid way he moves the story forward is phenominal. Every word is used for maximum effect: there are no frills, none. Reading Stephen King you are reminded of George Romero, the economy and rapidity of his camera shots, or perhaps even more, you are reminded of EC Comics.

To make it simple. Stephen King writes good stories. He puts them together, each piece in the puzzle, for a specific effect. He can make me tremble and shiver after 10 pages.

With NIGHT SHIFT, he can do it again and again. And he does.

Stephen King loves horror stories. He grew up loving them. He has turned around and created new twists to traditional formulas of horror. He is the finest writer of modern horror stories around. When I say modern, I mean it. His stories are set in the present. The ordinary situtations. The most peculiar places (the Blue Ribbon Laundry, for instance, the setting for one of the better stories).

What does Stephen King think about his craft? His unabashed desire to write primarily in the horror genre.

"All my life as a writer I have been committed to the idea that in fiction the story value holds dominance over every other facet of the writer's craft; characterization, theme, mood, none of those things is anything if the story is dull. And if the story does hold you, all else can be forgiven."

"Sometimes I speak before groups of people who are interested in writing or in literature, and before the question-and-answer period is over, someone always rises and asks this question: Why do you choose to write about such gruesome subjects?"

"I usually answer this with another question: Why do you assume that I have a choice?

"Writing is a catch-as-catch-can sort of occupation. All of us seem to come equipped with filters on the floors of our minds, and all the filters have differing sizes and meshes. What catches in my filter may run right through yours. All of us have a built-in obligation to sift through the sludge that gets caught in our respective mind-filters, and what we find there usually develops into some sort of sideline. The accountant may also be a photographer. The astronomer may collect coins. The schoolteacher may do gravestone rubbings in charcoal. The sludge caught in the mind's filter, the stuff that refuses to go through, frequently becomes each person's private obsession. In civilized society we have an unspoken agreement to call our obsessions "hobbies."

"Sometimes the hobby can become a full-time job. We also have an unspoken agreement that we will call our professional hobbies "the arts."

Stephen King has said he would be writing the stories he writes even if he wasn't making money off of them. This is comforting, especially when so many people prostitute their talents for money.

The stories in NIGHT SHIFT:"Jerusalem's Lot" is pre-'Salem's Lot, the ancient horror here is more Lovecraftian than vampiric. A later story "One For the Road" is a short epilogue to the novel, as the vampires claim travellers from New Jersey ("If there's anymore more purely foolish than a New Yorker it's a fellow from New Jersey.") "Graveyard Shift" is about the rats that lie in wait in an abandoned cellar of an old mill. "Night Surf" is about A6, a flu which has wiped out the good part of life on this planet. "I Am The Doorway" is a tremendously effective shocker about the changes in an astronauts body after his trip to Venus. "The Mangler" another favorite of mine, is about a pressing machine at a laundry that tends to devour people. "The Boogeyman" is about precisely that. "Gray Matter" is an offbeat story which has sworn me off Schlitz for the better part of my life. "Battleground" is a much-improved tiny toy terror story which wins out over TWILIGHT ZONE and Richard Matheson's TRILOGY OF TERROR segment of the same subject. Humans are once again slaves to unreasoning machines in "Trucks". "Sometimes They Come Back" is the finest story in the collection, about a teacher's memories of an earlier incident with 3 street kids. "Strawberry Spring" is a nice Jack-the-Ripper type story. "The Ledge" creates suspense extremely well. And "The Lawnmower Man" is a serio-comic suburban farce. "Quitters, Inc" is about the interesting methods an organization uses to help its clients quit smoking. "I Know What You Need" is an absolutely hypnotic love story unlike anything you've ever read before. "Children of the Corn" is a rural agri ritual HARVEST HOME type of story.

For those who accuse Stephen of not being a "serious" writer, two non-genre stories are included. "The Last Rung on the Latter" is a wonderfully simple and poignant story moving outward from a memory of jumping in the hay in a barn, and "The Woman in the Room" presents a wholly different horror, that of disease, age, and modern medicine which strips terminal patients of their dignity.

The stories are written with such an attention to the particular detail which calls up a twinge of fear, and with such vivid cinematic points of view (all of what Stephen King writes is readily translatable into film) that the images of your initial fear remain in your mind for a long time after.

(AW/DH)
DH-78

Punk vs. Power Pop

Following rock music criticism is a bit like following DC's "Superheroes" strip only on Sundays: you know something's going on, however nonsensical, but the whole affair's damn slippery. In a world of increasingly transient trends The Rock Music (as ROCK FOLLIES fans are won't to call it) is easily one of your more skittery trendforms. That's part of its draw, and Roxy Music drew it back in '74: "Every time I hear the latest sound/It's pure whiskey going round and round my brain." At its best rock music appeals to those in lust with measured instability...and to adolescents coming to grips with an immeasurably unstable world. Which makes matters mercurial at times for pro trendspotters--and their readers. Case in point: The Rock Music's punk movement.

Punk partly rose in reaction to the mid-Seventies' increasingly stagnant state of rock: the Big Names from both sides of the Atlantic who'd exhausted what they had (or acted like they had, anyhow) and settled into artifice and celebrity mags, the mediocre rock theatre types, the laid-back Southern cokeys jammin' to old Donovan songs and all the rest. But it wasn't the only New School of rock to do so--That's because every energetic group to rise out of the contemporary quag was getting labeled "punk" whether it was or not.

A lot of groups looked alike--in grub reaction to glitter glamming--even if they didn't sound the same. For another they all played the same clubs. For a third most of the groups aimed toward some of the same musical sights: a return to the idea that rock--even poprock--is supposed to be FAST! and compact and ragged. (A sensible response to the smooth and overproduced bloatworks masquerading as rock records in the middle Seventies.)

In effect punk rock was only one fraction of what broadly and conveniently (keeps you from making a fool of yourself in print) would be called "new wave."

PUNK ROCK, borne of that restrictive political/economic climate in the British Isles, is a fiercely confrontatory form. Much of its roots rest in earlier political rant-groups like the MC5, Stooges and the New York Dolls, all noted for a harsh primal FUCKEVERYTHING sound. (Just the stuff for stompin'-the-landlord fantasies.) Another source of inspiration for the punks was the Velvet Underground New York rockers led by Lou Reed, who sounded like they'd recorded in a sleazy Ditko bondage comic by lyrically detailing s & m and NYC streetlife tales. Not the sort of stuff to garner support from the AM pimple cleaners, which is why the above influences are known to few outside of devoted rock fandom. Same goes for punks really--at least in this country--for they've gotten precious little airplay.

POWER POP is a different piece of audience participation: lots of teen appeal, as Frank Zappa would sneer. Steeped in singles history--in groups like the Beach Boys, sundry Beatles era groups and overlooked AM singles artistes like Tommy James and the Shondells--the new poprockers combine hooks, the aforementioned speed and generally comic lyrics. In contrast to the occasionally overwrought punks, powerpoppers are concerned with FUN. Whether it's the B-flick fantalyricism of Blondie or the Rezillos, the dadadistancing of Nick Lowe or the Ramones, the dump stancing of Cheap Trick or the Dictators, power pop at its best takes the idea that Adolescence is Fun and meshes it with 70's cynicism. The idea's to laff and dance at the same time. Or laff while you're making out. Look to the Beach Boys' WILD HONEY ('67--and ahead of its time) for the closest antecedent.

New wave groups like Talking Heads and Television, performers like Elvis Costello, stick out like crescents in a round and square peg test, fitting neither punk nor power pop. So while the punk/power pop polarity is useful, overusing it's a mistake. Which is as it should be: critical vocabulary only pinches its subject, seldom grabs it. So let's do some pinching.

BLONDIE: Lead Deb Harry looks like cheesecake without the cheese and sings with deadpan gutsiness that recalls early girl-groups or a less mercenary Abba. The band's inventive (clever keyboarding from J. Destri) within the realm of pure poppery--even a one-song forey into disco can't dampen their winning crispness. Lyrically, Blondie celebrates pulp trash (eg. "Giant Ants from Space") and sexual ambivalence (Ms. H. singin' a luv song to Brooke Shields, for instance), though the former is a bit subdued on their most recent--and best--lp, PARALLEL LINES, which inclues (Flash From The Sixties!) an AM psychedlic paean to television. Shades of Strawberry Alarm Clock! Blondie is top power pop.

THE BOYS: One of those bands that move like punk but show a more melodic influence at base: the big clue's on second album ALTERNATIVE CHARTBUSTERS as a cover of the Hollies' hit "Stop Stop Stop." CHARTBUSTERS is a tad overeclectic to completely work, but it's a remarkably winning album especially for its send-ups of instant nostalgia: eg. "When all the punk bands/All sound second-hand/I will still be loving you." Musically the Boys resemble milder Ramones with nasal-teen British accents (they even sing an acne medicine ad that has the Ramones' first names as its chorus). Punk chipmunks.

THE CARS: A 1910 Fruitgum Company for intellectuals--that's the Cars. Beantown band possessing an alternating smart and banal lyrical sense and vocalists that've well studied Lou Reed. These guys fritter with camp the same way Roxy Music used to and it's easy to underrate them for it. On relisten their words get more pointed--teen lust turns into adult compromise and a nite of second best--and this plays off their innocent musical base in intriguing fashion. The Cars has one of the subtlest synths around: makes Pete Townshend sound Fat! I wore their lp down last summer.

CHEAP TRICK: Hardcore fans and certain Big Name Rock Critics included, have taken to calling this band of Rockford, IL Anglophiles the Best New Wave Band Around. I don't go that far, but I'm willing to listen to arguments: they've an admirable sense for hard-rock pop in the manner of early Who or Move and a knack for jingling that the Winged McCartney should envy (if he has any sense). At their best Cheap Trick hints of influence without making it obvious (they've got a propensity for putting Beatles jokes in their lyrics, however) and of their three albums, IN COLOR, the second, does it best. Visually the band is half rock glam and half forties Monogram pic--one of the rare bands that combines good state with musicianship--and they're almost always touring. If only their lyrics were more consistent I'd be happy: lyricist and keeno guitarist Rick Neilsen slips from hilariously snide (check out "Surrender," the single from HEAVEN TONIGHT) to just plain dumb too often for me. But maybe that'll be their winning card: AM radio doesn't like groups too smart.

DEAD BOYS: Lead Stiv Bators is a punk poseur but an entertaining one, and the Dead Boys are punk for those who ever took Alice Cooper seriously. In fact the Dead Boys second album, WE HAVE COME FOR YOUR CHILDREN, has the timbre of the Coops' prime mock lp noir LOVE IT TO DEATH in addition to a couple songs that could be as memorable as "I'm Eighteen" if their offensiveness (anti-Catholic/pro-Son of Sam) didn't preclude big airplay. As a band these Clevelanders lie just this side of competent, but their spit speed attack (wonderful on the Stones' "Tell Me") makes that irrelevant.

THE DICTATORS: The Dictators are morons, but they ain't stupid. These guys could be writing articles on "Is There Life After College?" for the Scholastic Weinie Syndicate, yet instead they've chosen to drop their pants in front of rock audiences, playing some of the fastest-slash-funniest heavy metal pop going. The 'Tators truck in overblown self-aggrandisement and patently phony teen melodrama: their first platter contained a metal cover version of the ol' Sonny and Cher dumbie "I've Got You Babe." Could be a lot of songwriters/bassist Adny Shernoff's jokes are the kind only a rock fanatic could love, but if any album of theirs is capable of being a mass success it's their most recent BLOOD-BROTHERS which contains the ultimate Moron's Anthem, "I Stand Tall," a solemn elevation of American burgerhood that has lead Handsome Dick Manitoba (sings like he lost half his teeth in a schoolyard fight) exhorting the audience to repeat he chorus and "stand up and be counted."

NICK LOWE: Longtime Brit rock junkies have followed ex-Brinsley Schwartz bassist Lowe and cronie Dave Edmunds through years of underappreciated shakin'--and-poppin'. Now le nouveau vague has created the right clime for Lowe's PURE POP FOR NOW PEOPLE and all's right with the world. Some critics accuse Lowe of glibness, and it's true his driving facility is a bit too obsessed with the trivial. (I mean: two different songs about the Bay City Rollers?!) But when his absurdo lyrics are delivered with the beef of two-chord rocker "Heart in the City" or with such classy variant hooks (as when "Rollershow" takes a turn from "Chapel of Love") only the terminally serious would think of complaining.

RADIO BIRDMAN: Want to know what a mediocre punk group sounds like? Well, then check out DMZ or the Saints or this group's debut Sire lp, RADIOS APPEAR, which takes its title from a Blue Oyster Cult song but its music from an Aurora model version of Iggy and the Stooges. One good cut: "Aloha Steve and Danno," which aims toward powerschlock with a break straight out of the HAWAII FIVE-O theme.

RADIO STARS: If 10CC weren't so damn aware of their proficiency they might have made music like Radio Stars, a band of early Seventies English vets (played in Sparks and with Marc Bolan, for instance) who combine boyishly frenetic poprock and bent lyrics with just enough tackiness and dissonance to keep them out of Loweland. Andy Ellison brightly enthuses about taking "Dirty Pictures" (these guys make smarminess sound innocent) and the act sounds oddly affirmative, a musical answer to the Velvets. The group's one platter, SONGS FOR SWINGING LOVERS, is only on import at present, but that situation shouldn't last long. If Frank Zappa weren't a pompous prune he might be composing tunes like this. If...

THE RAMONES: Took three albums to figure out what this band's up to: a lot of critics called them punk at first and in fact some rock fans have been known to use this group as reps for all they hate about the mode. For a power pop band with its roots in the Beach Boys (Kings of Rock Democracy: if you're middle class) the Ramones sure know how to polarize listeners! What these New Yorkers do is strip poprock down to its most basic elements--chords, drums and nasal twang--and play it quick and short (few songs exceeding 2½ minutes) Their first lps on initial listen favored a less tuneful beat that, combined with the band's attack, gave the impression of being Punk. But ROCKET TO RUSSIA, which one critic called the surf record of the

Seventies (he's right!) sets the record straight: boss California covers ("Do You Wanna Dance?" "Surfin' Bird") plus songs that could be California covers if the lyrics weren't NYC '77 ("Rockaway Beach," "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker") plus songs about cretin dances and DDT sniffin' and the inevitability of death...all sung in the style of a lobotomized Tommy James! Easily one of the best rock albums of the decade, say I. Bullshit, says editor Bill-Dale, putting a Jackson Browne album on the turntable. You'll have to make up your own mind (or meet us halfway at Warren Zevon and Blondie?)

THE REZILLOS: I myself haven't made up my mind on this set of bass heavy Anglo popsters, whose recent debut CAN'T STAND THE REZILLOS contains artful trash and a thudding remake of the Dave Clark Five's "Glad All Over." They're harsh, but I don't sense the control of the Ramones. And while I warm fast to femme vocalist Fay Fife (effervescently ultravi) I'm not so receptive to male singer Eugene Reynolds. At his best as in "No" he has teenrant frustration down to a scary degree, but he should be sued for nonsupport as a back-up vocalist. Give them another lp to iron out the wrinkles--or for me to decide whether I'm going to ignore same.

THE SEX PISTOLS: They made TIME and then split up--after singles fame and notoriety in England and a remarkably futile US tour in all the wrong places (skipped the cities, hit the Southern backwashes in a gesture of misplaced proletarianism or something)--and put out one album half composed of already recorded singles ("Anarchy in the U.K.," "God Save the Queen," "Pretty Vacant," "Holidays in the Sun") that's one of the most grueling batch of rock grooves going. A true punk success story. It's hard to "like" NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS, HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS--it's unrelievably angry, full of spit. But at the same time it's hard not to be impressed with Rotten, Vicious, Cook and Jones' drive and emotional commitment. From the start it's clear this band's on self-destruct and the spectacle's gripping. This ain't an album to be played lightly: if your not in the mood (and frankly lots of listeners are never in the mood) it's just cockney cacophony, but if your ready for it, BOLLOCKS will grab and jostle you. It's easier to take the Pistols in singles size (I play the 45 "God Save the Queen" more than the lp) but then this isn't supposed to be easy, certainly not for a semi-complacent Yank like me. In any case BOLLOCKS is an unquestionably great Pure Punk album, the one all the definitions come from. Whatever these boys do in the future (nobody retires gracefully from rock--and three-fourths of the band have since shown cretin tendencies with a "Sex Pistols" singles sans lead singer Johnny Rotten) their importance is assured.

TALKING HEADS and TELEVISION: With Television Talking Heads charts an area of new wave rock that approaches the art rock experimentations of groups like Roxy Music (it's significant that T. Heads' second lp was produced by former Roxyite Brian Eno,) mixing maximum impact music and openly intellectual lyricism to excellent effect. Of the two Talking Heads is the sparer and more appealing: lead singer/songwriter David Byrne has an ingenuous high-pitched voice and smartWASP sensitivity, Tina Weymouth acts as sensually stolid--or is that stolidly sensual?--bassist in a band that accentuates rhythm, and Jerry Harrison plays keyboards like he's pulling coins out of your ears. Lots of sly moves and diversions in a music that sounds like a crazed punch-press operator's aural hallucination couple with telegraphic evocative lyrics about love and work in America--a unique sound, to say the least. Byrne and company's first album strives for a pop edge, but the second, MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD, is more accessible. Television, meanwhile, pushes length and fluidly piercing guitar solos more than most new wavers: the comparison between them and the Grateful Dead's has been made more than once (though our New York new wavers are too bleaksighted to indulge in acid mellow) Leader Tom Verlaine has been around the Patti Smith/Blue Oyster Cult axis, an enclave of intellectual hard rockers that precurses new wave, and perhaps he belongs more with them. His lyrics show the same sense of poetism.

THE VIBRATORS: This fan's fave punk group. The Vibrators more than any others in the new wave look to the Velvet Underground for influence, blending sexual metaphor and sexual politics together with a sadomasochistic beater. These guys are both smart and nasty with a strong ear toward listener disorientation. Much like the Velvets had, in fact. Unlike them, however, the English Vibes are more economical and openly deliberate. Add two stingingly utilitarian guitarists (Knox and John Ellis) and a sense of teasing pastiche (the hollow studio drum-roll at the end of "Whips and Furs") and in premiere lp PURE MANIA you've got a remarkably replayable punk album, another I'm close to wearing down. The groups second, V2 (on import) is a bit less interesting (misplaced use of violins on it) but worthwhile. Reportedly, though, the Vibrators have been going through shake-ups since that second effort and may not even be together anymore. --Bill Sherman

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I got a number of letters concerning statements Jim Bertges and I made in AFTA #2 concerning punk rock. Eddy Flowers wrote: The one thing I really wanted to comment on in AFTA was Jim Bertges' "Now That It's Here, What Are We Gonna Do?" He displayed an ignorance of his subject as total and as hysterical as TIME and NEWSWEEK. The "punk" movement was anticipated by A CLOCKWORK ORANGE only in the same way that you could claim it anticipated the moods of the early and middle 60's in England. There is also a certain amount of emulation (not overly serious, though) of the book by some bands--I think mostly of the Dead Boys--but it's hardly anything to worry about. Your little note in Jim's piece was actually pretty humorous. You're worried about a bunch of people who wanna play Rock 'n' Roll music (always linked with violence in some way or another) when you're being fucked over by the government every single day? C'mon Bill! And believe me, aside from a few of the more pathological people who were attracted by the outward signs of violence, all these people want to do is play Rock 'n' Roll that reflects their lives around them. And as for social consciousness, the Clash, the #1 "punk" band in the UK now that the Pistols are gone, is very much anti-racist, anti-fascist, and anti-violence. Well, on the latter they admit the reality of the world they live in so while they may not dig it, they aren't exactly pacificists (are you?). Even the Pistols--well, Johnny Rotten said during an interview in San Francisco, "Rules are made to be broken, right? When there are no more rules or categorizations, when there are no more 'niggers' or 'whites', when there are just people, when there's no more punks, when there's no more dirt--that is when things are gonna be OK." But the press only picks up on swastikas (never bothering to note than as often as not it's accompanied by a hammer-and-sickle and maybe a Christian cross, more symbols of oppression). As for the 60's remember Chicago in '68? One of the very biggest influences on the New Wave bands was the MC5, a band which spurred on the street-fighting of that decade. The MC5 are exhaulted as heroes now--not by the old hippies who are obsolete relics--people who sold out their beliefs--no, by a new generation who recognize the power and the energy of the Five's music and are inspired by it. Also you both have the facts fucked up as far as the "punk" thing goes. The term was originally coined as a catch-all for 60's garage bands like the Standells, the shadows of Knight, ? and the Mysterians, the Seeds, the Music Machine, etc. It's been used since then for everybody from Bruce Springsteen and Nils Lofgren to the Tubes to the current bands like the Clash and Generation X. It actually has no meaning (except the original, at least to me). As for the current punk movement, it did not begin in the UK. If you accept the Pistols as the beginning point--as the first of the British punk wave--because the Ramones had an album out long before the Pistols released "Anarchy in the U.K." A great deal of the British movement was inspired, in fact, by the Ramones' first tour of England. And the Ramones came out of a scene that's been going on now for six or seven years, dating back to the early days of the New York Dolls (very influential on the Pistols) and lots of others. Also, Kiss is not in any way part of this movement. I really dig them, but they came in really at the tail-end of the glitter movement (which was really stupid although loosely connected to the punk stuff) and most of their songs aren't about violence at all, but SEX.

Most of these people are either interested in playing Rock 'n' Roll without compromise or they're interested in playing Rock 'n' Roll without compromise and commenting on the shit around them. You can't separate the anger of Elvis Costello from that of Johnny Rotten or the Clash. He wouldn't want you to, even. And the Tom Robinson Band openly acknowledges the influence of the Pistols and the Clash. The Clash, in fact, played with TRB at the big anti-fascist rally in London this past summer, along with X-Ray Specs and some reggae band. Most of the American bands, for better or worse, just want to play Rock 'n' Roll. It's all healthy. Better people into S & M or whatever it is, just as long as it's not violence inflicted on unwilling victims than sitting around "laid back" and "mellowed out" You know? Activism is EVERYTHING. Punk isn't decadent--DISCO IS DECADENT! ALL THIS FAKE HEAVY METAL LIKE FOREIGNER AND HEART IS DECADENT! These people--me--I just want things to be alive."

To reply to that, although reading my comments it wasn't that clear, I didn't mean to say that 'punk' rock was CAUSING any of today's problems, far from it. I'm glad it's there, and I'm one of the biggest fans of New Wave music there is--one look at the type of record reviews in AFTA #3 should prove it. BUT...The nihilism worries me. Like the 60's revolutionaries, those people in rock and roll who are making emotional statements (Elvis Costello) or political statements (Tom Robinson Band, Clash) simply want to fuck over the existing order. What do they have to replace it? Nothing. Lacking committment, I predict that all of the people you so love now will be absorbed into the system, in the same way the 60's patriots were (see "WHERE ARE YOU GOING, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN," especially the words on Bob Dylan to prove my point). Lacking a plan for change and a long range committment, they will outgrow their adolescent fantasies, as you will, and the great suburbial middle class fascism will sweep over all. Nihilism is fine, but if that is all there is, wouldn't you say that life becomes pretty boring? Valuing nothing--sex, women, love, compassion, idealism, optimism--lacking a philosophy will just make them and all the great teenagers and college students who now follow New Wave potential absorbees into the system. Rock now, while you are young, but there will be a point when you get scared, and stop believing in the precepts of rock. Myself I want to be able to rock 30 years from now. THAT is what worries me. That's all. I still think Jackson Browne is a good songwriter, and Joni Mitchell once was.

And Now, Record Reviews

Being and Nothingness (RSO) Turning Sartre's masterwork into a rock opera was something that had to be done sooner or later and who better to do it than Rock impresario Bob Stigwood. I was lucky enough to talk to Bob about this project months before it began and was able to scoop every other rock zine in the US and England (where were you RS?) Stig was lucky enough to get his fab Bee Gees to do the score and luckier still to get the ill Peter Frampton to do some vocals and some searing guitar work. It's one of the greatest multiple sets (15 records) on the market today and should be in everyone's disco library. Biggie Cuts: Adrift on the Sea, Death Must Be Better THan This, No Way Out. --Bob Murray

P.T.L.P. Live On the QE 2: (Delpo) Powerhouse rock that puts out as much energy as the ship it was performed on. --Bob Murray.

New Wave Discs

BE BOP DELUXE. DRASTIC PLASTIC.

Arguably Be Bop Deluxe's best album to date. The only thing that stops it from being a complete success is that in adopting a somewhat new stance and direction, Be Bop lay themselves wide open to all sorts of trouble in the future if they don't tread the narrow line between accessibility and sell out. The situation is similar to that of The Electric Light Orchestra after "A New World Record." That lp was without a doubt one of their finest. The follow-up, "Out of the Blue" however was inundated with all the worst tendencies of the band which had been introduced on "Record", but kept in control.

Be Bop Deluxe expose themselves to this same danger due to their change of direction. I think that the problem could be defined as follows: Last year I wrote a piece concerning progressive rock in which I split it up into three sections. There were the 'clever' bands like City Boy and 10CC whose main strength was in their tight song construction, clever lyrics, and ingrained sense of humor. Their main characteristic was the compactness of the songs, chock full of studio overdubbed business. There was no room for jamming or extended solos.

The second group was made up of flashy, power groups like Styx and Queen who kept the busy sound, but found room for the instrumental noodling around that broke up the wall of sound guitar and keyboard riffing.

The third consisted of bands that highlighted instrumental virtuosity, and placed everything else second to that. Be Bop Deluxe was indisputably the best of the field as Bill Nelson's long and lyrical guitar solos graced practically every song. The songs and lyrics served as mere backdrops for Nelson's guitar exhibitions.

Drastic Plastic moves Be Bop Deluxe from the third category to the first. The long solos are only hinted at with short, flashy breaks. Nelson has stepped back from being in front and let the band become less guitar dominated and more democratic. The songs are, on a whole, the best that he has written. The melodies are stronger and the songs punchier and more immediate than on previous albums. An air of remarkable tongue-in-cheek ridiculosity pervades throughout also. The result is the most enjoyable album Be Bop Deluxe has put out though, it might be less aesthetically pleasing than its predecessors.

The highlights include the pseudo-militaristic "New Precision" which marches lemming-like into the sea, "Surreal Estate" with its lunatic "Whistle While You Work" finish, and "Electrical Language" which is the most patently Be Bop Deluxe song on the album. There is only one cut that can be done without: The rather insubstantial "Islands of the Dead" which closes the album out.

Be Bop Deluxe gives a playful nod to just about everyone on Drastic Plastic. "Summer Time Blues" pop up during "Dangerous Stranger." Both the Seven Dwarfs and fairytales in general get a gentle tickling in "Surreal Estate." Punks get a double dose, first on "Love In Flames" which is musically the most blistering things Be Bop Deluxe has done, with its firecracker drumming and super-riff heavy guitar work climaxing in Nelson's only blistering solo on the album. New Wavers are also lampooned in "Possessions": "I paint my shirt with all the latest outrages/Just like I did so many years before."

--Stephen Graziano

THE CARS. THE CARS. (Elektra)

The band's sound is a very clean cut version of new wave. Reminiscent of Roxy Music, Talking Heads, and Queen, The Cars have put together a compilation of nine exceptionally strong songs. Each one is, as they say in the business, a potential chart topper.

Leader, prime motivator, chief songwriter and creator of the Cars is Ric Ocasek. Except for two obvious AM styled potential singles his vision of the world is surprisingly bleak. It's not so much Ocasek's words that convey this impression but rather the intense atmospherics that he surrounds his songs in. Organ and synthesizer, melodies swirl and pattern themselves around the very upfront but purposely simple drumming.

Roy Thomas Baker, of Queen fame, produces. His chief function is to polish off the Cars sound. To make the sound sparkle like a point of light off a finely cut diamond. The most obvious point of his involvement is in the harmonies. He's crafted their voices in that rich and orchestral style made famous with Queen. Aside from that, the Cars succeeds on the strengths of the band itself.

The Cars combine the energy of the new wave with the polish of English progressive of the middle 70's period i.e. Roxy Music, City Boy, 10CC (pre-split), Nasty Pop, etc. Bass lines are upfront, holding together the full but discontinuous guitar riffs. The melody line works its way around the music rather than with it. The result is quirkly (i.e. Talking Heads) but it works; and that's what counts in the long run. We are entering the post-punk generation and The Cars have a full two stride lead on the rest of the rapidly growing pack. --Stephen Graziano

CLASH. GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE. (Columbia).

The Clash are just about the last remnant of the first line, hard core, English punk bands. After the demise of the Sex Pistols it was kind of expected that they would carry the banner for the punk rock movement. Not quite as colorful or volatile as the Pistols, the Clash only succeeded in this regard partially. But it could be argued that if they did then they would have probably latched themselves onto some doomed vehicle that eventually would have died anyway and dragged the Clash down with it. Instead we have an album, miles above the first in recording quality, that finds the Clash bringing together classic rock root influences, in their own socio-politically oriented brand of rock. The majority of the work is actually melodic and the tunes catchy. But this newfound accessibility doesn't mean that the Clash are selling short on any of their oft stated ideals; rather they seem to be willing to let the songs work by subterfuge--the catchy melody and purposeful rip offs disarming the listener for the hard line stance that's about to follow. Their album is being billed as the "Only music that counts." That pretty much shows how they feel about themselves and that they still have some sort of mission to accomplish. --Stephen Graziano

CREME AND GOODLEY. L. (Polydor)

Creme and Goodley are the refugee half of 10CC that split from the band in order to work on this new instrument they invented called the Gizmo. That resulting lp, Consequences was only a half success being very experimental, too long (3 lps), and containing almost no songs. Shape up or ship out, their record company said; release something commercial. L is the answer to that request. On the surface it sounds commercial, but a few listenings reveal that demented sense of morbid humor that characterized Creme and Goodley's work with 10CC. All the tricks are here from the weird voices, strange subject matter (ex-lead off song "This Sporting Life" a tribute to the fine art of suicide), and now full compliment of weird and strange instrumental noises courtesy of the Gizmo. If you compared 10CC to the Beatles, Creme and Goodly would be John Lennon, and Stewart and Graham would be McCartney. Whose album would you rather listen to?

--Stephen Graziano

DEVO. ARE WE NOT MEN? WE ARE DEVO! (Warner Bros.)...Repeated listenings to ARE WE NOT MEN have served to confirm the comparison that sprang to mind when I first saw these guys, in a film clip on a September 1978 Midnight Special, whipping a horde of European punks into a pogoing frenzy with the marvelous "Come Back Jonee." To wit: Sort of like Talking Heads on speed. Not that Devo owes anything to the Heads, or vice versa, but each group's deep-rooted eccentricity inevitably recalls that of the other (and both remind me of The Cars, but this review is going to be long enough as it is). Both feature far-from-conventional vocalists (not to mention vocals) and both have now had an album produced by Brian Eno, from which fact a few similarities inevitably arise. (Compare, for instance, the percussion on "Mongoloid" here to that on the Heads' cover of "Take Me to the River") The Heads are more straight-faced (and laced) when it comes to humor, and generally do a good job of maintaining a facade of respectability despite a definite underlayer of outlandishness; the Devoids are unabashed nuts.

But ARE WE NOT MEN can certainly stand on its own, without benefit (or, for a reviewer, the crutch) of comparison. The album's first track, "Uncontrollable Urge," pretty much sets the tone for the entire album: the last thing you expect in its melange of jerky rhythms and equally jerky vocals is a background chorus that could have been lifted from a 1967 Monkees single, but that's what you get.

And you keep getting the unexpected. Who, for instance, would anticipate that the album's most immediately riveting cut, the aforemention "Come Back Jonee," would be an extrapolation of "Johnny B. Goode" that could only be described as the form that song might have taken if Chuck Berry had had radiation sickness when he wrote it? It doesn't take too vivid an imagination to picture "Come Back Jonee," a tune that virtually insists on being pogoed to, as a Top 40 single.

Other tracks are just as memorable: "Gut Feeling," which sounds almost MORish before dissolving into "Slap Your Mammy," the preferred guitar drill of mass murderers the world over; "Mongoloid," with oddly tender vocals that prevent it from sinking to the level of a NatLamp "joke," which its title and subject matter would lead most to expect; "Space Junk," featuring a captivating hook that any listener could hang onto, although lead singer Mark Mothersbaugh's recitation of place-names in its middle--"a Soviet sputnik hit Africa/India, Venezuela (in Texas Kansas)," etc. falls gather flat; and "Shrivel-Up," its various theorems related in the calm-yet-manic voice of a really committed rubber roomer.

And surely everyone has heard--or at least heard about--the two songs the group performed on Saturday Night Live, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" and "Jocko Homo." If not, suffice it to say that the former sounds like what you'd get if a bubbledomed garage band from 2274 AD unearthed, dissected, scrutinized, and then tried to reconstruct the old Stones relic. And the fact that the latter is the perfect anthem for a band like Devo ought to fit squarely into the 'Nuff Said' category.

There are a couple of throwawy tracks. "Sloppy" is too obviously an exercise in eccentricity for eccentricity's sake, and a good bit of "Too Much Paranoias" consists of the group demonstrating (with, one presumes, Eno's tutelage) How to Get Weird Sounds by Playing with Tape, ruining some nice panic-stricken vocals.

An out-and-out triumph which presents an outstanding argument for moving the nation's Weirdness capitol from San Francisco to Akron, whence the band hails. Akron in '84!

--Dan Bailey

BRIAN ENO. BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE. (Polydor Deluxe, 1977)...Don't be afraid of Brian Eno. He's just another Briton avant gardist trying to make a decent living off his own scattered visions. Get acquainted with him, sit back and sink into his idiosyncracies as you would a tale by Joyce or Lewis Carroll.

Eno has a wide world of musical peculiarities mapped out. In the past half-decade, he has played with several bands regularly (he started as a founding member of Roxy Music), sat in on innumerable recording sessions as a synthesizor specialist, and released some half-dozen solo projects. He is a prolific composer, having collaborated with or influenced several of Europe's top electronics-oriented rock musicians. David Bowie, Robert Fripp, Peter Gabriel and others of British music's vanguard intellegentsia owe Eno much as a source of inspiration. Perhaps the entire English smart-decadence rock band clique (Deaf School, Cafe Jacques, Be Bop Deluxe, etc.) which has resurrected the Roxy Music spirit finds its very emergence as a result of Eno's neo-Dadaist pioneering.

Eno always believed that music didn't necessarily need structuring, that it could be composed using a single melodic idea and improvising variations from that idea to form an intense, flowering mirage framework. Of course, this idea gained few takers from proponants of formula rock music. Today, few have adopted it. The Eno influence that has filtered into British vanguard rock has had to do with an autonomous, anarchistic use of instrumental tracks in studio recording.

Like Brian (Beach Boys) Wilson, a decade before, Eno perfected a certain studio-technology recording style before he actually became known as an influential composer. His instrument tracks consisted not of louds and softs, but of competing tones. Eno learned how to layer song mixes in the studio so that rhythm parts clashed colorfully against synthesized counter-rhythm effects, and offset discordant melodies and his own droning vocal style. The product would sound something like a quartet composed of a percussionist, a keyboardist, and out-of-tune bagpiper, and a fully-outfitted Hollywood sound effects man. The fascinating thing oftentimes was not the music, nor Eno's silly lyrics, but that the whole mess somehow went together--bass filled melody holes, percussion strung a unifying thread through what harmonics were there, discord provided the cutting edge to otherwise prosaic composition.

Eno sometimes denied himself conventional structure (e.g. melody/chorus/melody/chorus/bridge...) More, he denied himself conventional volume modulation practices in the studio. His instrument charts got complicated, but the purpose of each was to be heard along with the rest, not suppressed or accented as melody would dictate. Eno realized an energetic tension was to be found by pitting discord elements of his music against its harmony elements. Every song--combination of tones--has potential for discord as well as potential for harmony. Eno went further than most of his peers in fathoming the possibilities for songs having both discord and harmony. In Eno's ideas, surf music meets John Cage.

Faulkner once said that the last thing a writer learns is structure; Eno himself is getting used to structure (he has grown immensely as a musician in five years, too)

Working with Brian Ferry six years ago, Eno learned that a composer can effect individualistic revelations of ideas by doing away with conventional structuring. The process is physically based, paradoxically; the listener hears continued sameness in a song, and is forced to pay attention to shifts of dynamic emphasis among instruments, not to superficial melody changes. This gets the listener in tune with the physical nature of the composition. He feels the power of the instruments or voice, not the force of the composition manipulating the instruments. The instruments speak, harmonize, repeating basic melody lines in such a way that the listener feels moved not by reiterated musical ideas, but by the physical role in them carried out by the instruments. (For examples, "Mother of Pearl" and "Both Ends Burning" by Bryan Ferry, on Roxy Music's Stranded and Siren albums)

The structure is the reiteration, and the variations. Not clear-cut tonal/harmonic changes (although those can contribute to a desired end if used) This thinking may have solidified for Ferry after Eno left Roxy Music. Or Eno may have stood in the way of Ferry's realizing this motif while with the band. (Clearly, Eno had a hand in many Ferry compositions, if only to contribute ideas which would clash against Ferry's to get the artistic excitement both felt responsible for. In the case of "In Every Dream-home a Heartache" from Roxy Music, Ferry probably wasn't sufficiently sensitive to atonal electronic effects to compose the keyboard track) At any rate, Ferry's 'physical music' style grew potent following Eno's departure, while Eno evolved a non-structural bent he displayed in No Pussyfooting accompanied by guitarist Robert Fripp. No Pussyfooting revealed Eno as a minimalist; Eno's improvisations were practically monotonal. Yet Eno kept his variations-on-reiterations motif (it's been with him since) to confirm the development he had had in Roxy Music. When Eno was to learn structure, to toy with it, the variations/reiterations conflict would mutate into discord/harmonics contrasts and, in studio terms, equalitarian mixes. In fact, Eno's practice of eerily layering studio mixes almost sans intensity differentiation exists as a logical outcome of his penchant for closely posited variations on an idea. For Eno, a bar of recorded ensemble music should--were it visible--appear as a layered cake, with certain tracks countering each other's sound like cake and icing stuck together.

Eno was the cerebral counterpart to Ferry, the postulating scientist declaring where the curious romantic questioned. Eno was the catalyst of the two in Roxy Music, the one that took ideas and molded them to a diffuse, albeit fascinating final form. It is hardly a surprise that Eno's exploratory musical leanings (the harmonics variations motif) should overwhelm the Ferry influence-(reiterated harmonics) in his music. And it does, continually. (For instance, on one of Eno's best lps, Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy, the strongest tracks "Gives You So Much More," "Fat Lady of Linbourg" are rooted in Eno's characteristic minor-key disharmonics.

Still, elements of both motifs show in Before And After Science--the Ferry one perhaps prompted by Eno's recent work with David Bowie, who shares Ferry's sense for hyperbole and glossy instrumentation.

Side One features (ala Bowie's Heroes and Low) the "beaty" selections. It is the best side, containing fine work by good musicians and some disarming rock 'n' roll spirit from Eno. The guys had fun doing it, you can tell.

"No One Receiving" is a sort of space-disco stopoff. It sounds machine-like, and the lyrics one can make out are about men and machines. Probably another science fiction existentialism ride. But it's danceable.

"Kurt's Rejoinder" and "Energy Fools the Magician" are cloudy jazz trivialities, one up-tempo and crazy and the other one slothful and airy--like a slight buzz from a model airplane glue. "King's Lead Hat" has clap-your-hands energy reminescent of Led Zeppeline's "Boogie With Stu." "Lead Hat" will disappoint fans of Phil Manzanera and Robert Fripp who hope the first-time combination of these two virtuoso fret men would cook royal--but Eno's banging piano takes off like a mean cougar.

Side one's catchiest, most tuneful cut, "Backwater" is some of the most fun I've heard since the Beatles. I had to struggle all through the writing of this article to keep it out of my head. Eno plays brass instruments for the first time, and his lyrics are hilarious. You can't really dance to it--just shake and snap your fingers. It's Burton Cummings and Bob Wills and any number of fast-tempo polkas, all together.

Side two consists of three brief mood pieces and two longer, more structured tracks. The "mood" pieces, which carry a simple to almost non-existent structures, can seem like the tail ends of other songs. They sport only a few ideas, and don't discernably "move" in the sense of creating melody progressions. They are melodically cyclical, though their lyrics tell stories. They represent the latest form of Eno's minimalism--a compositional tendency he has nursed often before. Eno's voice drones gently over spare instrumentation. A minimum of conflict exists--but the feeling of discord discreetly persists. Surprisingly, Eno makes it work. Probably, he knew that simplicity is not something one can pursue half-way. Simplicity (of structure, of texture) is what he dealt with here. Eno has been complex, and he has been simple--but fittingly, never dully in between. Extremism is a science. That Eno makes it listenable testifies to his worth as a 20th century composer.

The two longer selections are both pleasant to listen to (Now we know Eno is willing to try anything!) "Julie With..." haunts the listener with its sluggish, almost slimy electronic resonances. It may be the one overlong cut on the album--Eno is almost never consciously self-indulgent--but it fixes the listener in a clammy grip. "Here He Comes" comes off as whimsical relief. The lyrics are a pastoral-tinged fantasy about a dreamer, I suppose, and the music fits their tone. It lopes along at a cocktail-C & W pace, Phil Manzanera's soft-touch guitar whipping the creamy synthesizer backgrounds into an ice-cream soft filling for the ear. You can hum along and feel mellow.

So there's a look at the Seventies' most important rock and roll innovator, the man whose disciples will someday inform popular music of the possibilities it has. He's not an artistic success sometimes. Pioneers must fail before they succeed. But always his inventiveness is exciting, invigorating. Cautious buyers may care to try the excellent Before And After Science as an introduction, or his 1976 release, Another Green World. The brave at heart can go gor his 1974 tour de force, Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy.

--Rod Snyder

Brian Eno's MUSIC FOR FILMS, a soundtrack to real and imaginary films, was released after Rod wrote this review. On Antilles Records.

GRAHAM PARKER AND THE RUMOR. THE PARKERILLA. (Mercury)...Graham Parker signed to Mercury a little over two years ago and promptly delivered two of the best albums of 1976--Heat Treatment and Howling Wind. Mercury did nothing. No promotion, no push. Now I saw Parker on his premiere NY gig and was blown away. Since then I've caught him whenever he was in town. He should be selling out 10,000 seaters like he does in England rather than opening at the Palladium or heading at the Bottom Line. I don't know who or what Mercury is spending their money on, but Parker ain't getting it. Even Nick Lowe's producing Stick To Me, a sure ticket to success in '77-'78 didn't help break him.

One can't really blame Parker for wanting to do almost anything to get out from under Mercury's yoke. A live album is the easiest way to get a product out on the market and fulfill a commitment. The Rumor, however, is such a tight outfit, that their live performances and studio cuts match each other in execution and intensity. The fact that no new material is included on the record makes it a bit of a letdown for those who are caught up in the Parker catalogue. For beginners though, its an excellent introduction, encompassing his major recorded efforts over the first three lps.

The Rumor is red hot. Guitarist Brinsley Schwarz is showcased to a greater degree than before and his guitar work challenges Parker's vocals for high point of the album. In a live context "The Heat In Harlem" comes into its own and turned up loud this album is almost as good as being there. The pacing of the concert--NYC's Palladium opening for Thin Lizzy by the way--is preserved.

The fourth side of this double collection is a studio version, 45 rpm cut of "Don't Ask Me Questions" which also appears on the lp earlier in a live setting. All in all this could be called Graham Parker and the Rumor's Greatest Hits. It's a very good album, but I know that his first lp for his new label is going to blow this away.

--Stephen Graziano

THE MOTORS. APPROVED BY THE MOTORS. (Virgin)

Their first album, I'm told, was pure punk, but APPROVED is near-unadulterated pop, and as such is vastly preferable to Nick Lowe's similarly-intentioned PURE POP FOR NOW PEOPLE, which has received much more attention. The Motors are genuine craftsmen-some of this stuff is so catchy it hurts--but their stuff is still energetic enough to knock an easy-listening addict senseless at fifty paces.

Standouts: an absolute killer called "You Beat the Hell Outta Me" (not a paean to S & M, although, oddly enough, the cut right before it is), "Sensation," "Airport," "Mamma Rock 'n' Roller" (infinitely better than you'd think). --Dan Bailey

PEZBAND. LAUGHING IN THE DARK. (Passport)

These guys sound like the Raspberries (not a bad band-just 60's copyists themselves) singing from behind a stone wall. The production quality is so poor as to render the impression that everyone, guitars included, were working with sponges in their mouths. I certainly feel like I have sponges in my ears when I listen to it. Whatever highlights and bright spots this record might have had have been filtered out leaving the impression that this whole lp is one long half hour song. I guess given this handicap, no group could overcome it and shine, but the Pezband doesn't even try. Nothing grabs, the songs show no promise of interest. The Pezband is very happy recycling 60's song figures. You have heard it all before, and in more interesting versions. This is deja-vu that'll put you to sleep. Power-pop? Don't make me laugh. This is pap; with the punch of a wet marshmellow. --Stephen Graziano

PLASTIC BERTRAND. CA PLANE POUR MOI (Sire)

Je ne parle pas, for all intents and purposes, Francaise, but the title track, with a hook stirring enough to make listeners go out and heave bricks through plate-glass windows, rocks like mad in any language. And the album on a whole is a grin (it is, after all, a punk parody). Recommended for those who can spring for an occasional extravagance.

--Dan Bailey

RAMONES. ROAD TO RUIN. (Sire)

I have friends in a band who are struggling to keep from starving by getting paying gigs and praying for a record contract. In an effort to be helpful I suggested they incorporate a Ramones cover into their act. We can't, they said, don't know the chord. Well ha ha the joke's on them--the Ramones now know at least two chords and they showcase them for all they're worth. Road To Ruin is the fourth installment in a continually improving series of albums that are tracing the history of modern rock song construction. In this episode the Ramones discover the lead break. Joey's taken singing lessons so you can actually understand the words and the departure of Tommy Ramone in favor of brother Markey hasn't hurt one bit. Don't fret, Tommy's still there--he's producing now. The Ramones are like the Beatles and the Beach Boys. Their music is doing to prove to be timeless. In the future it will sound as fresh as the day when it was first released. Besides the Ramones describe the current American teenager comic book/television/Saturday morning cartoon/blind rebellion/anti-intellectual culture better than anyone else. They already have two classic lines "I don't care" and "I don't like anything". How could they go wrong?

--Stephen Graziano

THE REZILLOS. CAN'T STAND THE REZILLOS. (Sire)

Combine Blondie, the Tubes, and The Rocky Horror Picture Show, throw in a generous slick of British punk ethos, and what's the result? We've got a British (actually, Scottish, but what the hell) New Wave group with a definite sense of humor.

"Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked in Tonight" in particular, sounds like an outtake of the Tubes' "I Was a Punk Before You Were a Punk," as covered by Frank 'n' Furter. A riot. And "(My Baby Does) Good Sculptures" is musicologically invaluable. Not only is it a songwriting first--"Don't like my baby for her pouty lips/Don't like my baby for her curvy hips/I like my baby 'cause she does good sculpture"--but it also provides us with the punk notion of a drum solo, as Angel Paterson does his damnedest to beat a hole through the drum in ten seconds. And there's a cover--enthusiastic, if not particularly innovative--of "Glad All Over".

The Rezillos are out-and-out comedians. Not that you'd expect anything else from a group that employs two--boy and girl!--vocalists, and a bass player named "Mysterious." Of course, they can't build a career on this sort of thing. Then again, The Ramones recently released their fourth album. And the Rezillos know how to play their instruments. --Dan Bailey

SHAM 69. TELL US THE TRUTH. (Sire)

I wouldn't call this "punk reduced to formula" as a few people have; that, to me, intimates that Sham 69 has deliberately come up with a few tracks that fit into what Britons (and Americans) perceive as the punk ethic, all for the purpose of being able to see their names on vinyl. Instead, if TELL US THE TRUTH represents the reduction of punk to formula, it's because Jimmy Pursey (lead singer and songwriter) and friends lacked the artistic means to come up with anything more, try as they might.

Some of TRUTH's tracks--"They Don't Understand," "Ulster," "What About the Lonely?" and the title cut--represent a failure of articulation: the band lacked the writing (not to mention the musical) skills to effectively convey their message, one which they considered important. Others--"Rip Off," "Hey Little Rich Boy"--imply simple witlessness; the group apparently needed a song or two to fill out a set and came up with a few angrily growled phrases that seemed to fit the bill. And one track--"Whose Generation" (sure the most bizarre thing yet cut by a British New Wave group; UK Squeeze's "Wild Sewerage Tickles Brazil" comes off as a McDonald's jingle in comparison)--is a failure to communicate in a way that the audience can easily grasp. And yet "Borstal Breakout," the last cut on the Live side makes the album. Lack of imagination of one sort or another is still evident--the refrain consists of four shoutings of "There's gonna be a Borstal breakout" ("Borstal" being, by the way, a British synonym for reformatory)--but Pursey and company have finally managed to overcome it. These ears haven't come across such unadulterated, seething rage since the phenomonal "Anarchy in the UK" last coursed through the headphones. And it's topped off with a pounding guitar break that's enough to stir one to hurl Molotov cocktails at the next police car, or at least to go out and call people "fascists" behind their backs.

--Dan Bailey

THE SHIRTS. THE SHIRTS.

The Shirts, or as a fellow Brooklynite would say, Da Shoits debut lp shows the Shirts as a polished and poised outfit as well rehearsed as one would expect of a band that's had three years to tighten up their material. THE SHIRTS is an album that will be looked back on in future years as a clear indication of the direction rock will take in the post-punk generation. The Shirts sound is a combination of progressive adventurousness and New Wave agressiveness. The Shirts sit square in the middle of the New York axis: guitar orientated like Television, introspective like Talking Heads, and displaying a twisted sense of humor in the celebrated Ramones tradition. Singer Annie Golden's voice also holds a strong resemblance to Patti Smith when she reaches the high notes.

As has been the New York tradition of the last ten years or so, the Shirts sound is distinctly English influenced. In fact, the Shirts owe more to the Beatles and have more in common with Be Bop Deluxe than they do with Lou Reed and the Ramones. It also looks as if the Shirts have picked up the Be Bop Deluxe practice of punny song titles such as "Empty Ever After" or "Teenage Crutch."

It's obvious that the Brooklyn quintet spent many evenings listening to Pink Floyd as the atmospheres of isolation and depression pervade the record. "10th Floor Clown" is a perfect example. Disjointed guitar riff, swirling rhythms, and ghostly harmonies combine with multiple tempo changes to produce a carnival of darkness effect.

Each cut off the record boasts its own particular charms. My personal favorites are "Lonely Android" a collage of new wave riffing, metallic sound effects, and avant-Anglo harmonies and a healthy dose of Brooklyn accented lead vocals, and "Poe" a rollickingly post punk rocker featuring Ramonesy guitars and ay-ay's, Italian movie theme music, and Deaf Schooly racousness.

--Stephen Graziano

STIFFS LIVE. (Stiff)

Stiffs Live chronicles the now nearly legendary Stiff Records' tour of England last fall. The roster of Stiff artists on this record shows Stiff at its strongest with Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Ian Dury, Wreckless Eric, and Larry Wallis. The lp still does manage to define a sort of "Stiff" sound. It seems to be a curious mixture of individual craziness mixed with early 60's rock roots, heavy riff guitars or horn, and pub-rock vocals filtered through an ale sodden sound system.

Nick Lowe's "Last Chicken In the Shop" kicks things off. Lowe is the poppiest of the fivesome and his songs come across as the lightest. He also likes to lift sounds and styles of early rock classics and stick them in his songs. So "I Knew The Bride (When She Used To Rock and Roll)" comes off like a Chuck Berry rocker; and "Let's Eat", a tribute to munchies if there ever was one, "I wanna chew, chew, chew, chew/Chew on a pizza/Let's eat!" sounds like the Animals on speed.

Wreckless Eric and The New Rockets and Larry Wallis' Psychedelic Rowdies finish up side one with singles Stiff released in England in 1977. Both play solid thumping rock, characterized by busy saxaphone and brass work. Wallis' "Police Car" stand out with its nighttimish atmosphere of crime, youth, and power providing a fitting end for side one.

Side two features Sriff's heavyweights, Elvis Costello and Ian Dury. Costello with the Attractions contribute the far and away two best cuts on the album. The first of these is the Burt Bacharach/Hal David composition "I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself". Elvis is normally on the giving

side of a jab in love affairs, but he shows that he too can be hurt by a sharp blow. His voice shows all the hurt, sorrow, dejection, and pain that Bacharach and David could have written into the song. Elvis goes from tortured to tormentor on "Miracle Man", which comes off even meaner than on the studio version.

Ian Dury is Stiff's biggest oddball. He slurs his slurky, perverse voice through "Wake Up And Make Love With Me" and "Billericay Dickie" The Blockheads lay down a bass heavy beat while the little guy with the gammy leg talk--sings his way into your heart or bed. The finale is a Dury composition, "Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll". If nothing else, it qualifies as song title of the year. Dury is joined by the entire cast onstage and turns the chant "Sex and drugs and rock and roll/Are very good indeed!" into sort of a lunatic's anthem.

Stiffs Live is recorded in an atmosphere of fun (even old guilt and revenge Elvis is smiling on the cover) and should put a serious dent into all those theories that English new wave consists of bile, puke, and hatred. The album suprises, intrigues, and delights. --Stephen Graziano

THE STRANGLERS. BLACK AND WHITE. (A & M)

The Stranglers, Lord help us, have become downright civil with their third album. Nothing on BLACK & WHITE even attempts to match the anti-social obnoxiousness of things like "Bring On the Nubiles", "Something Better Change," and "Burning Up Time" from NO MORE HEROES. Indeed, a lot of the stuff here is definately surrealist and/or science fictional, vid. "Toiler On The Sea," "Rise of the Robots," "Outside Tokyo," and "Nice 'n' Sleazy." Otherwise, things are pretty much the same: Hugh Blackwell flaunts (and sometimes abuses) the most riveting voice this side of Johnny Rotten; Jean Jacques Burnel exhibits some of the most adept bass-playing in contemporary rock, New Wave or no; and Dave Greenfield proves that using a synthesizer isn't neither sissy.

Standouts: "Nice 'n' Sleazy," "Curfew," "Toiler on the Sea," and "Threatened" (Note: for those who dote on such things, BLACK & White was pressed on odd-looking black, white and gray vinyl. Only drawback is really thick friends who want to touch the disc to make sure it is vinyl.)
--Dan Bailey

TELEVISION. ADVENTURE. (Elektra)

This album is the best argument for athiesm that I know of: if there were a god in heaven, ADVENTURE would have sold. No, it's not quite the best of 1978's New Wave albums, but it's certainly the most accessible as far as the general record-buying public is concerned. In other words, these guys are not at all threatening--not threatening-odd like Talking Heads or Elvis Costello, not threatening-visionary like Patti Smith, not threatening-militant like Tom Robinson. The lyrics are comparible to middle-period Dylan, and the music itself it capable of bringing to mind virtually any group that's featured particularly exquisite guitarwork, from the Yardbirds to the Doors. Sing (and founder) Tom Verlaine's voice sounds somewhat like Patti Smith with one important different (aside from the obvious): Smith usually sounds like she's trying to rupture your woofers and transform the world at the same time, while Verlaine is content to engagingly relate slightly spacey vocals of the sort that might have resulted if Dylan had joined a psychadelic group during the Summer of Love. There is no excuse for ADVENTURE's not selling at least a few hundred thousand copies. Then again, in these days of million-selling TV actors and vapid disco, the public might well find quality threatening. Standouts: "Careful," "Carried Away," "Glory," "Ain't That Nothin'".

TOM ROBINSON BAND. POWER IN THE DARKNESS. (Harvest) -- 2 album set

Considering the fact that virtually every song on this two-disc release is concerned with the same topic--Revolution!--it's quite remarkable that only a couple of them ("You Gotta Survive" and Dylan's "I Shall Be Released") drag at all. The music itself is basic, well-crafted rock 'n' roll, ranging from relatively relaxed and resentful ("Too Good To Be True," "Power in the Darkness") to fast and furious ("Man You Never Saw," "Up Against the Wall") and featuring inspired guitar (Danny Kustow's) that any hard-rock guitarist in the Western world would be proud to claim. Robinson often conveys his message with unsurpassable directness--songs like "You'd Better Decide Which Side You're On" and "Right On, Sister" make the average Sex Pistols anthem sound downright opaque in comparison), a fact that has made some rock critics squirm uncomfortably. Obviously, none of them thought to tell Tom Robinson that expressing one's sentiments without diluting them with masking words and sentences is no longer fashionable. And thank God: the result is one of the most arresting albums of the decade.

Standouts: "Up Against the Wall," "The Winter of '79", "Power in the Darkness", "Glad to be Gay," "2-4-6-8 Motorway."
--Dan Bailey

THE VIBRATORS. PURE MANIA. (Columbia)

Righto: a more succinct appraisal of this album than 'pure mania,' there cannot be. What we have here, folks, is good old damn-the-sound-barrier-full-steam-ahead, no-redeeming-social-value rock 'n' roll. But don't get the wrong impression: these guys can all play their instruments, and prove it superbly; it's just that they often exhibit a propensity for playing them at, ah, high velocity. After awhile, a few of the songs begin to sound alike--there are, after all, only so many sounds you can produce when you're flailing your power chords fast enough to send them into the next dimension--but this album is one of the most sheerly entertaining ones I've come across in quite some time. Really good vocals, too--vocals that, by the way, reveal an engagingly shameless preoccupation with S & M, as song titles like "I Need a Slave" and "Whips and Furs" ought to convey to even the most innocent of bystanders. And did I say the album is devoid of redeeming social value? A couple of cuts from PURE MANIA would be enough to blow the nearest 'laid-back' radio station into the next state.

Standouts: "Keep It Clean," "Petrol", "London Girls," "You Broke My Heart."
--Dan Bailey

WIRE. PINK FLAG. (Harvest)

You may have never heard Wire and that's a shame. This four piece English outfit presents a very intense, almost minimalist variety of rock. Their vision of the world is very introverted, like Talking Heads, but at the same time much more abstract--they're all from art school you--and violent. The result is almost like a trip to the front lines in some mental warzone. Jagged guitar runs are punctuated with standard English style punk drumming while the vocals work their way over, around, through, against the instrumental background. There are twenty two songs on this album so you can tell that they don't waste time in saying what they want to say.
--Stephen Graziano

WIRE. PINK FLAG. (Harvest)

Lyrics so stream-of-consciousness (you explicated "Oh it's unlust and the one dimensional boy") that they make Dylan's TARANTULA look as transparent as the morning newspaper. A sound as raw (producer Mike Thorne obviously prepared for the job at the Clash School of Musical Theory) as vocalist Colin Newman's voice, which sounds as if he grew up gargling staples morning, noon and night. And if the usual punk standard of three-minutes-and-a-cloud-of-dust for songs is considered economic, then these guys are penurious: of the lp's twenty-one tracks--no, it's not a double album--no less than six run under a minute, and only five stick around for over two. The songs per se are at least as off-the-wall as every other aspect of Pink Flag. For one thing, on Side One they're devoid of hooks, and not because, as one would think, the band lacks the ingenuity to devise them. That contention ought to be put to rest by the fact that three songs on Side Two--"Fragile," "Mannequin," and "Feeling Called Love" (actually "Wild Thing" dragged into the Space Age)--feature really strong hooks, and a fourth, "106 Beats That," gives us a glimpse of what would be a killer. Nope, Wire generally disdains hooks because that's one of its rights as Eccentric-with-a-capital E.

Indeed, the whole of Pink Flag is a manifestation of the group's determined--and inspired--eccentricity. Gripping, but odd as hell.

Standouts: "Ex-Lion Tamer," "Strange," "Fragile," "Mannequin"
--Dan Bailey

Here is a little something for all you nihilists out there--an EMPTY space:

WORLD EUTHANESIA CAMPAIGN. GO AHEAD, SEE IF I CARE. (Ziggurat)

WEC is one of the more frightening punk bands to emerge from the British safety-pin scene, not for its grotesque antics but for its utter seriousness of purpose. Reproduced on the inner sleeve is a signed and notarized statement of the band's intent to use their personal profits from the album to purchase a nuclear weapon from an as-yet-unchosen black market source, with the apparent purpose of trying to start World War III. The band's suicidal leanings reflect its terroristic approach to rock 'n' roll, and the result is almost as dynamic as Never Mind the Bullocks, and certainly more skillfully executed.

The Campaign's founder and prime mover is 20-year old Angus Haecker, who prefers to use the stage name Rex Vampire. In addition to playing high-powered lead guitar and doing the three-piece combo's unique punk-nee-rockabilly arrangements, Vampire has contributed some of the wildest lyrics this side of Elvis Costello. The subjects covered range from fast food ("I Dig Worms") to planned obsolescence in toys ("Kinky Slinkies", the album's single and title in England), but Vampire also tackles typical rock material, such as parental conflicts in "I'm All Your Fault":

I have to eat your food but I'm waiting for the day
When you get real old so I can send you away

Vampire's crooning style of delivery and sneering phrasing lies somewhere between Bing Crosby and the possessed Linda Blair; still, he communicates a real sense of savagery throughout the album; especially in the foreboding opening verse of "Kamikaze Disco Death":

They said that Johnny was a crazy fellow;
He didn't style his hair and he wasn't mellow
He didn't like the Bee Gees, wouldn't learn the new dances
And he owned a gun and he liked to take chances...

Clint Forrest, on percussion, plays his drums like he was machine-gunning hostages, and Frank Bren's brooding bass lines will knock the ashtrays off your speakers, but it is Vampire who makes WEC's first album more than just another exercise in black leather and white sound. Despite the obvious humor of his lyrics, it is easy to believe that he really does want to put the planet out of its misery. It's impossible not to feel his chilling conviction when he screams out "Destroy the World":

I'm tired of my life
It's no fun anymore
Since the Beatles broke up
Life has been a bore
A case of jet lag

Destroy the world!
Let the bombs fly--
The challenge's been hurled:
Are you ready to die?
I'll say it out loud,
I'd like a mushroom cloud!
Destroy the world!

After you hear the album once, you'll want to send Interpol after these boys. Listen again--you'll probably send them a donation for the Big Mercy Killing.

A second album is due to be released in England later this month, Give Us Your Plutonium. When it comes to the states, buy it. There might still be time...
--Brad Cahoon

I have used a number rating system for the following records. 1=Poor, 5=Average, 10= Fuckin' great.

BLONDIE. PARALLEL LINES. (Chrysalis).

Blondie improves upon her vocal range and emotional interpretations, strips a lot of the strangeness ("Attack of the Giant Ants", "Bermuda Triange Blues" "Contact in Red Square" --I kinda miss those songs) and tightens up the rock beat while still retaining the girl group power pop sound, in the group's third and best album. Prime cuts: "Hanging On the Telephone","One Way Or Another", "Picture This", "Heart of Glass" (which has been released as a disco single). Don't go away sad, don't go away mad, just go away. (10)

THE BOOMTOWN RATS. A TONIC FOR THE TROOPS. (Columbia)

Irish New Wave group led by songwriter-composer Bob Geldof has a sound somewhere between Bruce Springsteen & Elvis Costello. Crisp production and catchy arrangements make this a real gem. No new themes here-it's Springsteen's let's-get-out-of-this-town rock salvation in "Rat Trap" and "Joey's On the Street Again", mechanization "Like Clockwork" although I like "(I've Never Loved) Eva Braun". Hitler confesses he was "a little too ambitious maybe" and says Eva "never really fitted in the scheme of things/ She was just a triumph of my will." (8)

DAVE EDMUNDS. TRACKS ON WAX 4. (Swan Song)

Edmunds plays rockabilly, traditional 50's lyrics via New Wave. Basically it's Jerry Lee Lewis run through the Nick Lowe soundmill. One of Edmund's best albums, prime cuts are "Trouble Boys" "Not a Woman, Not a Child", "Deborah", and Nick Lowe's "Heart of the City." (8)

BRYAN FERRY. THE BRIDE STRIPPED BARE. (Atlantic)

Ferry has abandoned his synthesized sound for the sparse LA Sound (Jackson Browne's & Warren Zevon's Waddy Wachtel plays guitar and co-produced this album). As always, Ferry's own compositions far outshine his cover versions of other's songs (Carrickfergus, an Irish ballad, is nice, but Ferry doesn't quite make it with Lou Reed's "What Goes On" (but then no one can do Lou Reed better than Lou Reed) and "Take Me To The River" (which suffers only because of Talking Head's brilliant rendition). The best cuts-- "Sign of the Times", "Can't Let Go", "When She Walks in the Room" and "This Island Earth"--are all Ferry compositions. Obviously the poor reception of 1977's wonderful IN YOUR MIND (which was 100% Ferry composed) has caused Bryan to going back to doing covers. Ferry is a rock original, like Ray Davies-- his bizarre singing style, and off center romantic bent makes him a must-listen. Now that Roxy Music is reforming for a concert tour (and perhaps an album?) we'll hear some more of the old genius. (7)

ROBERT JOHNSON. CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND. (Infinity)

Blues guitarist Johnson's debut album is an intense Fifties rocker collection. Buddy Holly if he was power pop. Stunning guitar work. I've never heard such busy guitars-- they go snap, crackle, boing! Great stuff, although on casual listening it gets a bit repetitious, since the arrangements for each song are very similar. Prime cuts "Wreck My Mind", "I'll Be Waiting", "Wish Upon a Star"(8)

GREG KIHN. NEXT OF KIHN. (Beserkley-JBZ-0056)

Among a rock sensibility of misogyny, nihilism, and masochism among New Wave artists, Greg Kihn is a breath of crisp air. He plays rock and roll with a boyish charm, innocently and simply. On his third album for Beserkley (Jonathan Richman's label now being distributed by Janus Records. You will not be disappointed if you hunt down Kihn's first two albums, Greg Kihn (JBZ-0046, 1976) and Greg Kihn Again (JBZ-0052, 1977)--they should be easier to find now) is musically superior to his previous two, and just as endearing. How could you not love the clean cut and innocent vocals--songs executed without pretense or frills, with a healthy optimism and sense of good fun. In "Museum", he meets the "sole survivor of atomic war/A nightclub singer from the Jersey Shore" and they walk through the Museum of Modern Art ("It was alright/We never met a person we didn't like") and of course, he falls in love with her ("Just when I was ready to give up hope/I saw you making a fire in my telescope/ I was a helpless victim of your magnetism/I love you from the bottom of my organism"

His relationships are rooted in confidence and a sense of optimism. In "Sorry" he tells his girl "I can't go on like this endlessly/ Nor can I laugh out loud at your misery/Don't feel sorry for me...You've got a million things you can't say/But I'll be fine by next Saturday/It's okay/You're well on your way/ I can see your ship sailing in a dream"

"Everybody Else" is a song about self-esteem: "Didn't everybody try to be/Something you love so completely/It is a universe unto itself/But no one loves you better than yourself/Everybody else would bring you paradise/ Everybody else would bring you dreams/Everybody needs somebody else/That they can sacrifice/Everybody needs some self-esteem" He ends with "In your confusion you will become/ And in confusion you will belong/To everybody, everybody else." (9)

LOU REED LIVE. TAKE NO PRISONERS. (Arista) *Double Album Set. Cuts: Sweet Jane, I Wanna Be Black, Satellite of Love, Pale Blue Eyes, Berlin, I'm Waiting For My Man, Coney Island Baby, Street Hassle, Walk On the Wild Side, Leave Me Alone.*

This is a live album. And this is Lou Reed-- teasing, taunting, mocking, bleeding--being Lou Reed. Lou was here before the punks and will be here long after (As he says on the album "I do Lou Reed better than anybody") With Jagger's Lou Reed rip-off song, "Shattered" topping the charts, it's about time Lou Reed got the recognition he deserves.

Lou uses his binaural sound process with tremendous results: The best sound quality on any live album ever made: With headphones or properly balanced stereo speakers, a 3-D effect is achieved--you are there in the audience.

Lou Reed obviously isn't Lenny Bruce, as he tries to be on an album which has as much talking as singing, but he is Lou Reed, snarling and insulting the audience, telling hecklers to leave, saying to the band "Show an emotion and I'll fire you", then turning vulnerable and quiet (on "Waiting For My Man"). But of course there's mostly smart ass adolescent Lou Reed who thankfully has never grown up:"Give me an issue/I'll give you a tissue/You can wipe my ass with it."

The albums high points are the most obnoxious and chilish--Lou suddenly raving on about fame ("Don't you hate the Academy Awards, fuckin' Barbara Streisand, I'd like to thank all those little people, too many little people, I can't get their names, Fuck her and the little people") Patti Smith ("Fuck radio Ethiopia, I'm radio Brooklyn, Hey, I ain't no snob. If you write as good as you talk, nobody reads you."), the Palladium in New York ("I don't have anything to say. I just want it quiet for awhile. I've been here for a week. If you don't get that, you get Delesner at the Palladium, 14,000 animals throwing beer cans at you, but that's 'rock and roll'--BULL SHIT"), Norman Mailer ("I met Mailer at a party and he tried to punch me in the stomach. C'mon man, I said, hey, you've got to be kidding. Someone step on him."), the inspirations and writing of "Walk on the Wild Side" and his bitter hatred for rock journalists ("What does Robert Christgau do in bed? Is he a toe-fucker? Man, CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO ROCK. What a moron. I object to the fuckin' liner notes. John Rockwell, man, how heavy to get reviewed by Rockwell. "Mister" Reed. He studied at Harvard--opera, fuckin' opera. He's the critic for the New York Times that makes and breaks the beat rock bands. Christgau is an anal retentive. Can you imagine working for a fuckin' year on an album and getting a B+?")

The most amazing thing is that Lou steps right back into the song without missing a beat. His voice has got a wonderful Beat Generation, Lenny Bruce rhythm to it. He is best when he is half-talking, half singing in a monotone that is cynical and street-wise, but still let's the old pain creep through. What can I say, Lou? (10)

SPITBALLS. (Beserkley-530057, 1978)

Made in Holland, this features all the Berserkley artists getting together (try to figure out who everyone is on the back cover) and doing inane 60's pop hits (the Batman theme is even included, as is "Gino is a Coward" and "Boris the Spider"). The album is worth it just for Jonathan Richman who does an amazing solo in his ½-note range on "Chapel of Love" (7)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I SEE THE SHAPES I REMEMBER FROM MAPS

TALKING HEADS. MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD. (Sire, 1978)

When a group creates music and it goes beyond just creating 45 minutes of fun time listening, and instead creates a world, they are worthy of praise like the following:

TALKING HEADS captures the tone of the late 70's better than Dylan did for the early 60's--they tell us about ourselves. TALKING HEADS has produced the finest album of 1978. TALKING HEADS is completely original and unclassifyable by any standards.

Talking Heads creates a world unto itself: each song is a journey--the beat, always the beat, carries you along (it has elements of New Wave, of disco, of funk, of rock) while David Byrne's lyrics probe at the unused portions of your brain. There's a lot going on behind Byrne's catatonic eyes (unlike most New Wave groups). Byrne's vocals--high-pitched alley cat squeals, sensual, erotic, frightening, psychotic. Eno's production (The group produced their first album TALKING HEADS '77, Sire) adds a solid, spacey dissonance to MORE SONGS.

The best cuts on the album are "The Good Thing", "Found a Job", "The Girls Want To Be With The Girls","The Big Country" and the Al Green cover now AM single "Take Me To The River".

What kind of world does Talking Heads create? It's a reductive world, a world of intellectual nervousness, emotional unresponsiveness, no patience, a world where a mindless middle class work ethic is the only thing left that matters; a world in which people put trust in inanimate objects, their homes, their government, their buildings, more than their own feelings.

On "With Our Love", "It's just a look/And it makes the boys quiver" but "They've forgotten what this all means" and they've "Got to get to work now"

What is Byrne talking about on "The Good Thing"? "Straight line exists between me and the good thing/I have found the lines and the direction is known to me/Absolute trust keeps me going in the right direction/Any intrusion is met with a heart full of the good thing." Is it love? Success? Power? Violence?

This world is one in which the normal sexual roles are confused and no longer operable. "Girls don't want to play like that/Just want to talk to the boys/Just want to do what's in their hearts/And the boys say 'What do you mean?'/And the boys say 'What do you mean?'/Well, there's just no love/Then there's boys and girls/But the girls want to be with the girls."

"Found a Job" tells the story of Bob & Judy. The tone of their lives is determined by the mechanics of television. Beginning with a superbly paced lead-in break from "Girls", it begins "Damn that television/What a bad picture/Don't get upset/It's not a major disaster/There's nothing on tonight/I don't know what's the matter/Nothing's ever on, she said." Like Costello's "Watching the Detectives" the line between reality and tv-reality becomes blurred. "Judy's in the bedroom/ Inventing situations/Bobby's on the street today/Scouting out locations/Make a list of all their friends/It may help save their relationship/They think they have a hit/There might even be a spinoff/But they're not sure about that."

"Artists Only" (the other song he did on SATURDAY NIGHT Feb. 10) describes his creative process as "cleaning my brain" and tells us "I don't have to prove that I am creative."

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BLUES BROTHERS. BRIEFCASE FULL OF BLUES. (Atlantic)...In the middle of a plastic disco and thugistic rock movements, we should be espacially honored to have among us Jake and Elwood, the Blues Brothers. And that they seem to be also a commercial success, gives me hope for the taste and sanity of America.

The Blues Brothers have become a miracle of modern communications, since it was their one and only appearance on SATURDAY NIGHT which established them as a "name", sent them cross country, and gave them a contract with Atlantic Records. And that one appearance is also making this album a runaway success, including heavy radio airplay and an ad campaign.

The Blues Brothers music is two steps away from current rock, and one for modern jazz, and in that very ood niche they manage to pour out all the power and balls of a Blondie without any of the noise. You can dance to the Blues Brothers, you just gotta do it by yourself. And that's what the blues are all about.

Except for two cuts ("Shot Gun Blues" and "Groove Me") the damn thing nearly pours! Recorded live, without any of the defects that usually inclues, the energy throughout is hot and tight, the music as professional as it can get, and the vocals of Joliet Jake are literally ripping.

It's almost impossible to believe something so professional, fine, and powerful could be commercially successful.

--Steven Alan Bennett

A BRIEFCASE FULL OF HYPOCRISY--A REBUTTAL

Steve, it is not surprising that the Blues Brothers is hovering in the top of the charts as I write this.

The Blues Brothers is a classic hype story in the American tradition. So help me, if I read one more magazine article that tells the STORY OF THE BLUES BROTHERS I am going to go crazy.

What is the album? Satire? No, it is done straight. What is it all about then?

We have two competent performers skimming over an entire field of music, the blues, selecting the "standards" of the blues, and performing them. I am revolted by the whole concept of it (not necessarily because of the music--the album is very good) A parallel. John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd doing the blues classics for an ignorant audience, is like Frank Sinatra singing the great songs of rock 'n' roll to his older easy-listening audience. When John Belushi asks his audience to go out and buy blues albums, will they? Nah. These album is popular because of...yes, BELUSHI, not because of the blues. Let's play this for all the starving PROFESSIONAL blues musicians who are in poverty while this sits comfortably in the top 10. Sad, sad, sad. --Bill-Dale

BOSTON. DON'T LOOK BACK. (Columbia)

Maybe Boston thought that after two years nobody would notice if they put out the first record again with a different cover. I'm onto them, though. This record is only for those that don't own the first record. Both of you. --Stephen Graziano

GRATEFUL DEAD. SHAKEDOWN STREET. (Arista)

I sure hope fanatics at large remain loyal. This isn't a bad album--actually, it's a very good album--but not a very good Dead album. One could put the blame on producer Lowell George, but knowing Clive Davis directs Arista's bands, even from his distant presidency, I would sooner say he's the culprit.

Lowell George was borrowed from the band he leads, Little Feat. The result of this new pairing is a distinct avoidance of the laid-back feel that is a trademark of the Dead sound. George's production gives a tight, rough bite, reminiscent of the Muscle Shoals sound, to Shakedown Street. This attitudinal switch creates changes in the music. Tangents, i.e. solos, unique sounds, and extended bridges and middle sections, are repressed beyond the call of duty to Clive and Mother Radio. This is most obnoxiously apparent in the over-use of the much-too-early fade-out. Where once the most often quoted criticism of the band was the deadly length of some songs, brevity has not rarefied them. The occasional, rambling moments of genius have been replaced by occasional spurts of wit.

Specifically notable: The title cut's melody sounds typically Dead, made unique by the existence of a Haven't-I-Heard-That-Before funky riff. Jerry is at his best but his solo is mixed way too low. Still, the lyrics beat any other recent dancing music (disco, if you will) for post-Dance floor aesthetic fulfillment. The Dead have always been a Dance Band. Unlike Disco, you don't have to FLASH, or practice dancing to them. You just shake it. And Shakedown Street shakes it.

It would be fruitless to review "Good Lovin'"--you're probably all too familiar with it by now. If you're not convinced that it's the Dead playing, wait till it comes on the radio at your favorite pizza joint, let the melody register as a golden oldie, then snap your oily fingers and exclaim, "Hey, that's Bob Weir!" Nobody will care. Grunting, they'll return suspiciously to the difficult mozzarella, while you sit, pondering "How come the Dead tried so hard this time?"

"I Need a Miracle" and "If I Had the World to Give" are both memorable songs that should not be dismissed unsung (or dwelt upon for too long). The remainder of the album? Cuts begin with interesting musical ideas that promise everything and proceed nowhere.

There is much consolation in the new heights to which Bob Weir's vocals and Jerry Garcia's guitars (heartthrob) are soaring. That consolation is necessary at all bodes ill. (I bet the Dead w/o Mr. Davis would not have faded "Fire On The Mountain" so soon) But they are dealing with recording flaws, and that's a healthy sign. Also, production is thick, but there's a tasty bite to it. The time is ripe for this experiment in discipline to end, and an exciting maturity to appear--next time. --Bill Stella

RICHARD AND LINDA THOMPSON. FIRST LIGHT. (Chrysalis)...Richard and Linda are two English folkies, late of Fairport Convention, that manage to combine the charm of the English countryside with a deep sense of atmosphere that wavers between religiousity, pessimism, sorrow, and quiet. Listening to their albums is a captivating and stirring experience, but don't expect to walk away feeling good. It can often be very depressing. --Stephen Graziano

THE WEREWOLVES. SHIP OF FOOLS. (RCA)

This is the second album by this group of Texas rockers. On their debut effort, titled simply THE WEREWOLVES, there was not much on it that distinguished them from the rest of a large number of barsy rock 'n' rollers that have been springing up this past year. Based on that standard, SHIP OF FOOLS, represents a great leap forward for the Werewolves.

This album establishes the band as a hard driving, bright sounding outfit; and it shows their potential to be a major act in the future if they can further hone and refine their sound and identity.

Producer Andrew Loog Oldham took his charges aboard a boat and recorded the whole thing live-no overdubs (hence the album title) Maybe it is the association with Oldham, but many of the cuts on SHIP OF FOOLS bear more than a passing resemblance to another band Oldham was associated with-The Rolling Stones. This is especially evident in singer Brian Papageargе's phrasing and the bands affinity to r 'n' b, bluesy, countrified rock 'n' roll --admittedly a Stone's forte.

This is not meant to pass off the Werewolves as Stones copyists-just saying that the Stones are a taking off point-a reference source. Another Stones similarity is the generous use of horns to keep the sound bright. The best use of these is on "Summer Weekends", the kick off song to side two.

The Werewolves sound hungry. They're as raw and palyful on record as one would expect at a club date, or even college mixer. They seem to realize that if a band expects to make it these days they're going to have to offer more than competence...It's that aggression and constant pushing that makes SHIP OF FOOLS a good record. The Werewolves are working hard at creating that exactly right sound and it pays off. The record boogies, rolls, and stomps from start to finish. They sound like they're having fun,too.

--Stephen Graziano

YES. TORMATO.

YES CONCERT. Madison Square Garden, Sept. '78.

When I first was exposed to Yes, way back in 1972, I felt as many did that they were the spearhead of the "progressive rock" movement. It was a short-lived feeling. After the "Tales of Topographic Oceans" album I felt that were actually becoming parodies of themselves; not taking themselves very seriously.

Then came the much publicized departure of Wakeman in 1973, and the addition of Patrick Moraz to take his place. At last I thought they were making a move in the right direction. I was right; "Relayer" is their best album, fusing Moraz's jazz keyboard solos with Howe's guitar leads. I caught their show at Roosevelt Stadium in 1976 and left feeling there was still a chance to regain their position as the top progressives. Then Moraz leaves and Wakeman is back, after finding out his solo albums sounded great to him and no one else. And 1977 brings us "Going For the One", surely a drastic step in the wrong musical direction. This album was aimed perfectly at every pseudo-intellectual who was still looking for universal meaning in their lyrics. For the record, Yes words are used for their sound, not their meaning.

This schizoid relationship I have with one of my favorite groups came to a head when a friend in the music business called me to say he had an advance copy of the new album, wanted me to hear it, and then take in the show at Madison Square Garden. As luck would have it, I received the tickets before the album, and set off for the Garden not knowing what to expect.

The group came on about 15 minutes late; they launched right into "Siberian Khatru"

capped off by a frantic guitar solo from Steve Howe. They followed with "Heart of the Sunrise".

They were smart; they didn't get into the new material until well into the set. They used a give and take policy; we'll give you the oldies, you put up with the new ones. "The Fish" was followed by "Circus of Heaven" and "Don't Kill the Whale." They then launched into "Perpetual Change" and "Gates of Delerium". It was here that I noticed the audience's almost fanatical enthusiasm for everything they did. Jon Anderson could have farted in the mike and they would have loved it. Steve Howe's smiling at the audience during his guitar solo brought screams and virtual hair pulling. It didn't seem to matter that they were singing flat during most of the songs.

One has to admire these guys. For their bravery alone, they deserve a medal. They were continually pelted with firecrackers, bottles and other assorted objects throughout the entire show. During Wakeman's keyboard solo a bottle hit him in the arm and landed on his moog. He didn't even wince.

"Starship Trooper" was followed by two songs off the new album, "Mandrigal" and "On the silent Wings of Freedom"; the best song of the evening and the one they should have closed with. But instead they closed with "I've Seen All Good People". Their encore was of course "Roundabout."

It's depressing indeed to see aging rock stars trying to rock out the way they used to. The voices were strained, the solos sometimes embarrassingly bad, and there was absolutely atrocious mixing of the sound. But it seems the more these guys are dismissed as pompous airheads, overage hippies and terribly pretentious, the bigger they get. They were definitely worse than when I had seen them at Roosevelt, yet the crowd reacted twice as strongly. Crowd psychology?

The next day I received my copy of TORMATO. Although they may not have it together onstage, they most certainly still have it together in the studio (where we all know anything is possible). The opening song, "Future Times", is definitive Yes, but still did not hook me. The song that follows is the reason Yes are considered pretentious; "Rejoice" is pure filler with nothing to distinguish it. "Don't Kill the Whale" follows, a song that isn't fit even for AM radio. A harpsiochord based "Mandrigal" follows with some very nice mandolin accompaniment by Steve Howe. But it is the last cut on this side that catches one's attention: "Release" is pure progressive rocker, moved confidently along by Howe's hacking guitar and Wakeman's keyboards. There is also an interesting drum solo by Alan White, who previous to this album has never been given the opportunity to do a solo.

Side two opens with "Approaching UFO", which seems to be an updated "Starship Trooper"; the themes are the same. "Circus of Heaven" is next, a stream of consciousness song that is other-worldly in sound, and is capped by Anderson's son Damien's yearning for clowns. Cute. A Chris Squire song is next. "Onward" is a beautiful song; how it made it onto this album is anyone's guess. The lyrics are beautifully written (the words are used for their meaning instead of their sound; an interesting change) and there is a solemn moog solo by Wakeman which brings this particular cut into the realm of classic. The album closes with "On the Silent Wings of Freedom" which is really a song that cannot be categorized; it's too well done. The album is worth buying for this song alone. Beautiful harmonies by Chris and Jon are weaved between Howe's guitar and Wakeman's synthesizers and Birotron, all underpinned by Squire's Rickenbacker. Pay particular attention to the time changes; proof that these guys are still the best songwriters in the rock music business.

"Tormato" is infinitely better than "Going for the One", and shows signs they're not ready to give up yet. It's a mixed bag; something for everyone. However, I think the members of Yes would be smart to listen to themselves; "You'll see perpetual change" They themselves must decide if they wish to change with the times. They show signs of being willing to do so.

--Doug Cameron

A number rating system is used for the reviews following. 1=Aw, c'mon. 5=Fair, 10=Superb.

ALICE COOPER. FROM THE INSIDE. (Warner Bros.)

A great concept--an album about an insane asylum and the people that populate it. Fine album packaging--the most original this year. The record inside fails on all accounts--I keep thinking what someone like Alice Cooper could have created with this...wait a minute! This is Alice Cooper. Sounds like wimpo Elton John to me. (Alice--send Bernie back to Elton)

Where is the humor? Where is the driving rock? Is Alice trying for a sympathetic portrait of his inmates or going for satire?

Borrow the album from someone else and listen to a funny cut called "Millie & Billie", a cloying, sweet folky duet between Alice and backup female singer. The two young lovers chop up the woman's husband with an ax: "I liked your late husband Donald/But such torture that memory brings/Locked up and sealed tight in baggies/Guess love makes you do funny things/Oh, Billie, Oh, Millie... crim-in-ally insane..." Why couldn't he have kept this up the whole album? Alas, Alice, you went limp. (4)

JOHN DENVER. JD. (RCA).

This album is an interesting departure for Denver--he actually rocks out on a few cuts: "Downstill Stuff" and "Johnny B. Goode" I was impressed enough to removed his name from my LIST OF PEOPLE WHO SHOULD HAVE A SPIKE THROUGH THEIR HEAD. But his down-home country boy, yee-hah attitude and mindless optimism (One song is called "Life is So Good" here are the lyrics: "Life is so good/Life is so good/Life is so good these days/Life is so good these days/Life is so good) prevent him from making it seriously in my book. Besides, he looks like a frog. (5)

BILLY FALCON'S BURNING ROSE. (Manhattan Island)

An album from 1977 by a Jersey Shore group led by Billy Falcon. Falcon comes across as a young Bruce Springsteen with the rough edges and anger sanded down. The songs are catchy, danceable, and show really talent with lyrics. If you like the Asbury Park sound, this is an indispensible addition to your set. Prime cuts: "Friday Night", "Boys and Girls" (7)

STEVE FORBERT. ALIVE ON ARRIVAL. (Nemperor)

Dylan comparisons are expected, not necessarily helpful. Forbert came to NYC from Minnesota and created his mark as one of the few folk/rock artists to appear among New Wave bands booked at CBGB's.

Forbert accompanies himself on the guitar His craggy, breathy voice sketches out--very economically--the people and voices of his trip out to the big city, and life since then. Doesn't sound like anything, right?

Ah, but listen to him. There is something compelling about his voice and the sparse, acoustic accompaniment and production of ALIVE ON ARRIVAL, his debut album.

He sings traditional folk songs, but they are laced with a painful cynicism, of dreams gone sour. On "Going Down to Laurel" he sings "I'm glad to be so young/Talking with my tongue/Glad to be so careless in my way... Best of luck and all/Try and have some fun/ They tell me this great life can always... END" Fresh, youthful dreams come face to face with disappointment. Idealism goes sour on the most affecting cut on the album, "It Isn't Going to Be That Way" (a powerful phrase which derives its charm from its pure naivete):

You've travelled so far with the wind in your face
You're thinking you've found that one special place
Where all of your dreams will walk out in line
And follow the course you've made in your mind.
Hey, it isn't gonna be that way...
I came on my own and felt much like you
I thought I was kind and knew what to do
But everything burned, and fell from my hand
I had to turn back, or build a new plan
Hey, it isn't gonna be that way...
If I were a God, I'd give you a clue
This minute would crack, and I would go through
And walk out in time where no one has been
I'd come back and tell what I seen
But it isn't gonna be that way...
You'll just have to live and see what you find
And take it from there and follow the signs
You think you can live and dream your own fate
You think you can wish and walk through the gate
But it isn't gonna be that way...

The best non-New Wave artist to debut this year. (10)

BILLY JOEL. 52nd STREET. (Columbia)

Sure, there's a nice jazzy feel to some of the songs, but that don't help. His piano bar cynicism has given way to Barry Manilow crooning and commercial success. Eons away from his earlier albums like PIANO MAN and TURNSTILES. Haven't we heard the songs and themes on this album before, much better? Watered down versions of his earlier songs. A processed and formulaized sound is what remains. Billy--listen to a song of yours called "The Entertainer" (3)

JIM MORRISON. AN AMERICAN PRAYER. (Elektra).

A dazzling nightmare trip into the mind of a major rock legend--his thoughts, as he reads his poetry to original music by The Doors--about death, sexuality, and America--are black, jagged, and fascinating. "Did you have a good world when you died/Enough to base a movie on?" Oh, yes. (8)

VAN MORRISON. WAVELENGTH. (Warner Bros.)

This lacks the lyrical complexity and sullen mysticism of ASTRAL WEEKS and T.B. SHEETS, but Van's got his act together. The songs here work because the Man has a way of creating subliminal nuances in his voice that reach you somewhere else. As he says on "Santa Fe", "It's more than a song to sing." To quote his lyrics would make him look silly (Dum derra dum dum, etc.)--just let me say his voice holds something-- pain, soul, passion, every line sounds like it really means something, and like he's ready to burst. If you've seen him in concert, you can feel it--tiny, lumpy little Van there shaking and jumping around like a tiny pressure cooker--settle into this album by all means. Prime cuts: "Natalia," "Venice USA", "Hungry For Your Love" and "Take You Where You Find It" (a curious song about America: "You will find a purpose to carry it on/Maybe when you find it your heart will be strong/About it...Lost dreams and found dreams in America") (8)

LINDA RONSTADT. LIVING IN THE USA. (Elektra)

Nooo Baby, Baby. This album showcases Linda's talents as a vocalist, for sure, but as all her albums of late--doesn't work coherently as an album. Songs varying widely in style and persona-- Is this a recital? An audition? Is she trying to prove something? Is she trying to please everyone? "Alison" is so nice, you forget Elvis Costello wrote it. Of course, there is the obligatory Warren Zevon song, "Mohammed's Radio" (why doesn't she just re-record Warren Zevon's first album--she's almost there already). Linda sounds tired, uninterested, like she's going through the motions. She's got a voice which exudes professionalism, lacks heart. (3)

CAT STEVENS. BACK TO EARTH. (A & M)

Cat Stevens, the grand guru of every virginal, pimply college freshman girl who knows a few chords on the guitar (who plays the songs while sitting in a bean bag chair, of course, and commenting how mellow it is)--offers yet another collection of his simplistic observations on love and society. Lost here is the innocence and evocative voice that made songs like "Father and Son" work (I do like Cat Steven's early works). What is left is sheer drugery. And drugery always gets a... (1)

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES. HEARTS OF STONE. (Epic).

With this album, Southside steps out from the shadow of Bruce Springsteen and develops as a real rock and roll candidate on his own, apart and above. Yeah, it still sounds like Springsteen, with Miami Steve producing and playing guitar, and Max on drums, but the lyrics are heartfelt, and Johnny's vocals are laced with honest emotion and pain (especially on "Light Don't Shine")

Of course, just recently, their label, in recognition of their success, has told them to take a walk. Thank you, Eprick. (9)

10CC. BLOODY TOURISTS. (Polydor)

The addition of reggae rhythms to the 10CC sound adds a nice touch ("Dreadlock Holiday"is great) but they are truly hampered by the loss of Creme and Goodley. Heavy sound effects and cute mixing cannot prevent the sappy love songs from being exposed for precisely what they are. (5)

PETER TOSH. BUSH DOCTOR. (Rolling Stone)

The integration of a more "American rock" sound and arrangements (i.e. production by Mick Jagger & Keith Richards--Mick even joins Tosh on "(You Gotta Walk and) Don't Look Back") without destroying the reggae spirit that much. He does get silly on "Creation" and "Bush Doctor" (Day say it cure glucoma) but redeems himself admirably on cuts like "Don't Look Back", "Moses", and "Stand Firm." (7)

TOM WAITS. BLUE VALENTINE. (Elektra)

Philip Marlowe meets Jack Kerouac and ..t gets on a record. Waits, the persona (as opposed to person) responsible for such gems of wisdom as "Reality is for those people who can't take drugs" and "I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy" sketches portraits of the seamy, ugly, and down and out folks that populate the diners, bars, and graveyards in his mind. He layers image upon image and growls them out with his gravely voice. Beat Generation style. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. Here they don't click. Although his rendition of "Somewhere" from West Side Story is memorable. When he sings "Somewhere ...there's a place for us" it conjures up some pretty nasty landscapes. Not one of his best, judged against his previous half dozen efforts. (5)

NEIL YOUNG. COMES A TIME. (Warner Bros.)

The long awaited album from the only living hippie/folkie still around, using acoustics and fiddles, no less.

The songs here are quiet, unassuming songs (suggestive more of HARVEST than ZUMA or AMERICAN STARS AND BARS), songs about love and nature, and the rhythms that run through both. The flow. Nothing is rushed, all is casual. After a few listenings, the songs begin to grow on you. Nicolette Larson's back up vocals here are impressive, esp. on "Motorcycle Mama"

Neil will release a film soon called HUMAN HIGHWAY (From the cut here "I came down from the misty mountain/I got lost on the human highway...Take my head and change my mind/How could people get so unkind?") and it will feature a cameo by (can you believe it?) Devo in a nightmare scene. (8)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Elvis is Armed

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS. ARMED FORCES. (Columbia, 1979).

(Includes an EP "Live at Hollywood High" with side 1-"Accidents Will Happen", "Alison" side 2-"Watching the Detectives")

There are very few people who are talented enough to change their sound and their tone with every album. It takes a talented producer and creative artist. Bruce Springsteen is one of them. And so is Elvis Costello. His first album, MY AIM IS TRUE, has a pub rock sound reminiscent of early Dylan. His second, THIS YEAR'S MODEL, is a driving hard rock sound, relentless and angry. ARMED FORCES is totally different, a crisp sound (Nick Lowe is producer) which calls up ghosts of Lowe's work for Graham Parker.

ARMED FORCES has great touches-- little sound effects, overdubs, echoes, and transpositions which make it a real pleasure to listen to again and again and marvel at the clever sounds. The lyrics are a bit difficult to pick up in places (vs. say, MY AIM IS TRUE) but the sheer variety of each song from cut to cut makes this one of the best New Wave albums to ever be released. THIS YEAR'S MODEL sounds repititious and amateur next to this.

ARMED FORCES is also Elvis' most powerful album, socially/politically. It may be one of the most important albums all year, too. Hopefully it will be one of his more successful (this week, Feb. 14, ARMED FORCES is #19 on Billboard's hot 100)

ARMED FORCES is a very political album: mercenaries and terrorists abound, the game of love becomes the game of politics. Although some of the references are a bit difficult to understand being Americans. I admit my ignorance and ask for help in understanding the references and inspiration for songs like "Senior Service" "Oliver's Army" and "Goon Squad". It took me awhile to figure out "Less Than Zero." Perhaps I should move to England so I can do better record reviews?

Costello's wit is still here, as is his skill in writing literate and intelligent lyrics. I prefer the EP version of "Accidents Will Happen" (with Elvis accompanying himself on just the piano). The album version with The Attractions is also good: "There are so many fish in the sea/That only rise up in the sweat and smoke like mercury/ They keep you hanging on/They say you're so young/Your mind is made up/But your mouth is undone...There's so many people to see/So many people you can check up on/And add to your collection...But accidents will happen."

"Green Shirt" is about television love. "There's a smart young woman on the light blue screen/That comes into my house at night/ She takes the red, yellow, orange, and green/ And she turns them into black and white" He asks "Who put these fingerprints on my imagination?"

"Accidents" happen in "Chemistry Class," too. Elvis has a unique way of dealing with rejection, for sure. "You got a chemistry class/I want a piece of your (You know what I was expecting?) mind/You don't know what you started/When you mixed it up with mine/Are you ready for the final solution?" "Ready to experiment/Ready to be burned/If it wasn't for some accidents/Some would never ever learn."

The love relationship is reduced to a political struggle in "Two Little Hitlers"-- "He wants to know the names of all of those he's better than" and "Two little Hitlers will fight it out until one little Hitler does the other one's will."

The most peculiar and most gratifying song on the album, because it is completely out of character for a New Wave artist to take this decidedly Sixties pose, is "What's So Funny About Peace, Love and Understanding?" The last song on the album, is this a portent of things to come? Could it be that the misogynist, nihilist Costello is actually offering us hope? As the Phil Spector wall of sound churns up, Elvis sings these blatently Sixties lines anthem like conviction. It's convincing as he says:

As I walk through this wicked world
Searching for light in the darkness of insanity
I ask myself, 'Is all hope lost?'
Is there only pain and hatred and misery?
And each time I feel like this inside
There's one thing I want to know:
What's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?
As I walk through troubled times
My spirit gets so down-hearted sometimes
So where are the strong, where are the trusted?
And where is the harmony, sweet harmony
Each time I feel it slipping away
Just makes me wanna cry
What's so funny about peace, love, and understanding?

--Bill-Dale Marcinko

What's So Funny About COMEDY?

FUNCTIONS

Laughter is a way of dealing with anxiety. When a situation is too threatening, absurd--- when it violates the normal flow of action and our assumptions about reality, we laugh. Think of laughter as verbal tickling. When someone moves close to tickle you (and if you are not ticklish, or people no longer tickle you, what kind of friends do you have anyway?) you become very frightened in expectation of what is to come. When that someone finally connects, you let out bursts of uncontrollable laughter. But is it the physical touching that causes the laughter? No. For example, you cannot tickle yourself. Other people must be involved. Or if you are really kinky, at least a suitable imitation of same. Laughter can be said to be a way of dealing with fear and the unexpected.

For us human people as a social species, laughter (and smiling) has taken on another function. From very early on, a baby learns that smiling and laughing have the effect of bonding people to him. Smile at someone---they smile back. Sharing laughter is a way of creating intimacy between people. Go to a comedy film with a group of your friends. After you have spent two hours laughing, being aware of other's laughter, and perhaps even sneaking a glance at your friends to see what the expression on their face is like, don't you feel good? Much better than if you had seen the film alone.

Laughter is a way of establishing bonds between people. Usually laughter makes people feel very stable, adjusted, and optimistic toward the immediate future. (If only the heads of state of our countries could get togther and laugh before their peace talks, perhaps we wouldn't be on the brink of a nuclear disaster, perhaps. Laughter is a powerful tool)

Sadly, as we get older, we also learn that we can use laughter to ridicule people. People tend to laugh at themselves and others, for the most part (assuming people are generally stable and together---an assumption which is becoming increasingly difficult to make) and this is good. But some people (insecure themselves) laughter becomes a tool to abuse people. A group of high school boys decides to laugh at the less athletic, clumsy, skinny, "nerdy" kid in the class---this repeated ritual of cruel laughter just makes the nerd become more of an outcast. It is interesting that laughter can be used both as a tool to bring people together and also as a tool to alienate and segregate them.

Comedy is really very positive and a healthy experience. Although satire and black humor tend to have other aims than just to make people laugh, comedy in its purer forms (farce, nonsense, absurd humor) can make us saner.

Comedy, you see, allows you to deal with feelings of violence, sex, death, and prejudice (normally very serious topics would they be handled direct and solemnly) without feeling guilty. Making a joke about Guyana can serve to reduce the real horror and shock of what has happened. You are dealing with the situation, but you are doing it in a safe way. Right after the first news of Guyana settled down at Rutgers, I can remember many of my friends (who are loving, caring people, not cruel cynics) joking about Guyana. Before the shock of what happened sank in, and we were able to express our feelings more honestly and directly. Comedy is theraputic.

However, dealing with topics which make you nervous solely through joking can become a crutch, a bad habit, which PREVENTS you from feeling, from ever dealing with it. Joking about a situation is fine, but you can't stay on that level of awareness.

FEELING

Horace Walpole said "Life is a comedy to those who think; a tragedy to those who feel" This is true. Comedy deals with surfaces. Comedy is abstract, imaginative, intellectual. Were you to react to a situation emotionally in a more direct way, it would no longer be funny. An example---a man steps on a banana peel, he slips and falls. You laugh. Then you find out he's someone you know, and he broke his arm and suffered a concussion. It is no longer funny. You feel guilty.

Comedy deals with surfaces. For slapstick, the THREE STOOGES, LAUREL AND HARDY type of physical comedy, the presentation is in such a context that you temporarily suspend your belief that falling down or getting poked in the eye hurts, and stop feeling for those poor people. In the world of comedy, falling down doesn't hurt. The coyote gets blown up hundreds of times in THE ROAD RUNNER cartoons, but is he ever splattered across the tumbleweeds. No, just a little sooty around the edges. In comedy, a character just wipes himself off and begins again (Black comedy on the other hand, is the opposite---people die and stay dead)

Comedy gives you a feeling of power over the situation. Often when you are able to laugh at an event, you are able to remove it from the worry, pain, and grief which surrounds it. Take death for instance. I suspect that we will worry about death for another million years, lacking understanding. I will still cry when dear old dad and mom snuffs it. But sometimes joking about it makes it less frightening. The ability to remove yourself from the EMOTIONAL CHARGE and BOND and looking at something "super-objectively" is what comedy is all about. This too, is good, provided it is not taken too far.

Someone who always laughs and someone who never laughs are equally unrealistic and maladjusted. I am not suggesting that we all be FEELING people, and never laugh at anything, because the reduction of feelings is nasty. Neither am I suggesting that we constantly laugh at something because that is the best way of dealing with it. A balance, after examining carefully the situations and people involved, is the key.

COMIC HEROES

The central character (or characters) in comedy often have a similar set of drives, so that we can sketch out a basic mold for something called a "comic hero."

In what we call comedy (in whatever medium---film, tv, book, play, it matters not) we make a number of assumptions about reality and the way things will go in a comedy.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER is Comedy celebrates the life force. It celebrates success, love, sex, energy, wit, and a coming together and continuing on of some positive values and experiences. Many comedies, therefore, have the hero falling in love or at least, chasing after someone with sex in mind. Many comedies, too, end in a feast or social orgy of some sort (party, marraige, etc.) Look at the climax of ANIMAL HOUSE.

Woody Allen, in his films, chases after a girl (Louise Lasser, Diane Keaton, etc.) which he tries to win over in a number of ways. Woody is always concerned about sex, and his sexual performance (notice all the mock bragging and sexual jokes). He is the best example of our present-day comic hero.

In the Marx Brothers movies, Groucho always went after a rich widow (usually the wonderful Margaret DuMont) specifically for her money. Acquiring money, becoming successful is important in a comedy. Most comic heroes are very poor, and try, during the course of the play, to achieve some kind of success, power, or wealth (A good example of that is W.C. Fields)

In a "romantic comedy" , the main concern is a couple falling in love. The end result is marraige or some kind of union (recent examples being HOUSE CALLS, HEAVEN CAN WAIT) In some ways, ANNIE HALL was a romantic comedy---but it became much more than that, worked on many other levels.

A comic hero is resilient. He is invulnerable in some ways against pain, disaster, and failure. Woody Allen always manages to come back (his tool is language---a joke) and hit the people who dominate and humiliate him. He doesn't give up. People in comedies never give up. That's what makes them so much fun. In real life, people give up often.

A comic hero fights and fights and fights and we admire him for that. Laurel and Hardy try repeatedly to get a piano up the stairs. Inspector Clouseau, in half a dozen movies, has had bombs and guns land just out of reach. He comes out of it everytime without a scratch---the assassins never succeed. The comic hero is in some ways, invulnerable, a superman, who can walk through the midst of danger and never really get hurt. He is in some ways immortal.

The comic hero is very versatile and adapts easily to new situations. I only wish that more people I know would emulate comic heroes rather than tragic heroes. A tragic hero, like Robert DeNiro in TAXI DRIVER, for instance, is doomed right from the start, we know it. We experience his loss of sanity, hope, and optimism. He can't change. The ending is always pessimistic. He falls.

Comedy has been popular and always will be, because people admire the persistence of comic heroes like Clouseau, Woody Allen, Charlie Chaplin, and others. Perhaps they root for them and return again and again to see their films, because they are so unlike those comic heroes. The real people give up easily, their movie just doesn't end in feasting or love or social union. This is sad, considering we have the ability to transform our lives into comedy, and ourselves into comic heroes. Laughter can restore our insanity, until we can get things fixed up. Why is laughter trivialized? It is important. It's about time people realized that.

FARCE

Farce presents a number of easily identifyable characters who react in a predictable way from start to finish. The characters rarely go through changes. The story focuses not on individual characters, but their interrelation and the future of the social group. Farces are fast paced, almost always involve issues of love, sex, drinking, partying, dancing and easily delineated goals (bedroom farces, for instance, consist of a number of people running about trying to get into each other's pants) ANIMAL HOUSE is best present example of a farce. What is valuable in ANIMAL HOUSE? Drinking, partying, the faithful dedication to the frat. ANIMAL HOUSE zips along, celebrating optimism, being alive, outrageousness, and indulging yourself in spontaneous, wild orgies. I can't argue with that, I'm afraid. The villains in ANIMAL HOUSE are those people who represent the "rules" like Dean Wormer and Neidermier. They want to supress the festive spirit of the frat. The brothers of Delta House just want to have fun. And that's surely ok-ay.

ABSURDITY

Monty Python, Firesign Theatre, Steve Martin, Robin Williams and a number of others fit in this category. Here the laughter results from the sheer nonsense and silliness of the new combinations which they make. In a way, this a comedy of madness. One of Python's standard devices is to contrast the stuffy, stoic British gent with another character, who is just a bit mad. Good examples of this are things like The Dirty Vicar, or The Reverend of the Church of the Divine Looney Up the Cream Bun and Jam, who visits a couple on the patio and proceeds to go doo-doo-doo-doo-doo and smash dishes (later returning as the Cheap Jokes, a couple next door). Of course, most sketches are more complicated than that. Python is brilliant in that they are imaginative enough to take historical figures, philosophy, and social events and twist them: The Spanish Inquisition. The Old Ladies discussing Sartre, The

more comedy

All-England Summarized Proust Competition. Firesign Theatre does something very similar although the comedy there rests in puns, and in the curious combination of words and people's names (George Tirebiter), and the brilliant subtlety in which they execute it. Robin Williams is pure absurdity, jumping from character to character, from bad jokes to references to tv, with such rapidity, that the speed works to make him funny. Steve Martin's persona is that of a stable, ordinary, casual-kind-of-guy, hey, c'mon, complete with deep, announcer type voice, who suddenly makes a fool of himself by saying incongruous things. Like Ivy-League collegiate look Chevy Chase tripping over things, the Steve Martin "sound" and "pose" is half the humor. Try writing "Excuse Me" or "Wild and Crazy Guy" on paper and explain what is funny about it to someone. You can't.

BLACK HUMOR

Black comedy takes material that is usually suited for tragedy (death, sexual perversion, insantiy, diememberment, deformities, etc.) and treats it in a comic way. There is always a nasty side effect to black humor. You laugh at it, perhaps, but you realize the laughter is hollow--the jokes ultimately depress you. "Hire the handicapped--they're fun to watch" is black humor. Black humor assumes that all the normal values and beliefs present in regular (white?) comedy--happiness, security, sanity, love, laughter, etc.) must be undercut, because they are no longer valuable. Black humor assumes a world where there is no God, no ruling moral or ethical structure, no moral goodness, nothing to strive for. Terry Gilliam (the animator on MONTY PYTHON) and author Joseph Heller are black humorists.

SARCASM

Related to black comedy is SARCASM. Sarcasm is bitter, cutting insults usually levelled at people. They are delivered in a dry monotone. It is subtler than an insult. And often more effective, if like me, cruelty is your kind of game, hey. Barth Gimble (Martin Mull) is the best example of that. Sarcasm is cruel--it seeks to make the object of the sarcastic comment look stupid (the implication is that the person who makes the comment is obviously smarter) It is saying something obvious in a matter-of-fact way. The tone, flat and serious, covers up the underlying meanness.

IRONY

Irony is concerned with the incongruity of events. Irony results from the particular combination of events, or words. Another meaning tends to evolve from ironic statements--often irony has a touch of the 'pun' quality to it. You can't trust an ironic person, because you never know what to believe. If a meter reader for the gas company died of asphyxiation in his garage, that could be said to be ironic.

CYNICISM

Cynics believe that people are basically selfish and incapable of altrustic hopes and ideals. Cynicism is the condition of no-hope and no-faith in anything. Cynics prepare themselves for the worst, but they are not pessimists (pessimists believe everything will turn out bad, cynics don't even have enough faith to believe that). Cynicism is a technique like sarcasm, which reduces the hopes and dreams and aspirations of people. It reduces the life force tenets (love, marraige, success) by not putting any faith in the validity of things. Cynicism is a kind of defense which protects you.

SARDONICISM

To be sardonic, is to be suspicious or skeptical about something. Basically a synonym for cynicism, but this is much lighter, more diluted form.

SATIRE PARODY

Since comedy naturally deals with the surface effect of language and actions, it can be expected that SATIRE and PARODY would be the major devices of a comedian.

PARODY is poking fun at someone or something by imitating it, but in the process, changing a few details, so it resembles, but does not duplicate exactly, what it is you are parodying. Parody is not generally cruel. It doesn't have any other purpose than to present the parody to the audience and somewhere in the course of it, have the audience recognize the object of the parody. MAD MAGAZINE's movie parodies are prime ex.'s

SATIRE, on the other hand, although it is like parody in that it too makes fun of something familar to the audience, does it for a clear reason. In parody, the act of parody is justification enough. Satire wants to make people laugh, but also tries to condemn those who are evil, foolish, pretentious and stupid and get some kind of message across. In satire, there is always a kind of moral or ethical lesson to be learned from it. Satire seeks to replace the existing values with new, improved values. Good satirists are very serious about their work--they want to do more than have fun. They want to use the device of comedy to reach people and make them think. To challenge their beliefs. MAD doing a take-off on Close Encounters would be parody, but if someone did a bitter take-off on Anita Bryant and Born-Again Christians, this would probably be satire, because the implication behind the jokes is "This person is evil" "Be careful of people like that, and accept MY attitude about it" Parody rarely causes controversy and tempers to flare. Satire inevitably does.

PRACTICE

The effect of comedy results from a cumulative series of surprises. Each time you laugh is the point at which (I like to call it) the comedy "springs". Jokes are the most simple examples of it. A joke is built up through repetition and delineation of a certain story. It creates a certain expectation of events. Then the punchline hits you. If it is a good joke, the punchline will be unexpected (but not so unexpected that it doesn't make any sense) and "spring" the establish pattern. Comedy is funny because it frustrates your expectations. The funny line in a joke is one which is an embarrassing, absurd, or imaginative response, not an expected one.

In a larger sense, good comedy writers (like Woody Allen) work by this repetition and pattern of "springs" and also manage to fit them all together in a storyline in a very cohesive way. So that the story stands by itself, but so do the jokes. ANNIE HALL is much more than a series of one-liners.

Often an unfunny line or event can be made funny by repetition. The predictability of certain characters to behave in a way is funny (this reduction of men to machines is what Bergson's theory of comedy is all about; Freud's theory of comedy is the reverse--he believes comedy relieves sexual repressions) A good example is a joke Woody Allen used to tell in his nightclub act. Each line ended with "...and Gertrude Stein punched me in the mouth." It became funnier with each repetition. The Mary Tyler Moore School of Situation Comedy Writing often presents a running gag (or a number of them) at the beginning of the show, which repeated again throughout the show, becomes funny. This is especially evident in The Bob Newhart Show.

Comedy must be carefully planned so it has the desired effect you want. There is no such thing as a sloppy comedian. Intonations of words, subtleties in your own voice, and a sense of timing become important tools.

The comedian's relationship to the audience is important (especially with the live stage comedian) Going up on a stage and making people laugh is a tremendously fear provoking experience. Comedians tend to deal with that nervousness in a number of ways, either expressing their anger in mock hostility or trying to "make friends with the audience." Don Rickles and Martin Mull for instance are mock-hostile to their audiences. Henny Youngman and Woody Allen try to win your confidence by depreciating themselves and their looks, talents, etc. Sharing their neurosis and problems, and asking you to identify with their sorry state. George Carlin and Lenny Bruce invite everyone to be "hip" together. Robert Klein remembers the old school days and 50's tv and movies.

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JOACHIM STERNUU SCHWINE: COMEDY AND ITS' RELATION TO THE HOMOCIDAL TENDENCIES OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY --Jim Baker

(Joachim Schwine was a late 19th-early 20th Century Austrain psychologist whom no one paid much attention to. What little popularity he did have, stemmed from the fact that he wrote in very liegible, large print, whereas his contemporaries (such as Rank, who wrote backwards) all had unreadable handwriting, making them unfavorable with the general public)

We often ask ourselves, "What is funny?" If we get a reply, we are then carrying on a conversation with ourselves. This is a sign of a dual personality, schizophrenia, or the "two-headed syndrome"; immediate analysis is recommended.

When I am at a party and I place a lampshade on my head, do the other guests laugh because a man imitating a floor lamp is funny, or because the host is going to make me pay the light bill? Let us take the example of the classic joke "Why did the chicken cross the road?" Is this a joke at all? Or just a simple question of ethics? Do we laugh? Or do we do the dishes instead? If we do laugh, why? Just what is laughter anyway? If one is mute, does he laugh without making a sound? Or does he just not bother to develop a sense of humor?

I am reminded of the story about the sailor, but choose not to relate it because it is not funny. Certain topics are always sure to bring forth laughter, but why? Perhaps it is the lure of the chase, the primal instinct in us all to play Las Vegas. And the caveman, did he too appreciate the comic, or did he go someplace else because the cover charge was too high?

Slipping on a banana peel is the stunt recognized throughout the world as the epitome of the sight gag-but why not the orange peel? Or the avacoado for that matter? Why not? (Aside from the fact that they are not particularly slippery) "Because," as Freud relates, "the banana is phallic, and the peel suggests cimcumcision."

If I were to tell a series of very funny jokes in plain clothes, would I get the same reaction I would if I were to dress up in a clown costume? The answer if yes-and no-and maybe. Indecision is a sign of a weak mind-immediate analysis is recommended...Now if I take the same series of jokes and imprint them on my body with a hot fire-poker, are they going to be more warmly received? (This last question has a "pun" in it, yet another member of the comedy population) But of course imprinting jokes on one's body with a fire-poker--no matter how funny they are--is a sign of a definite character flaw. I recommend immediate analysis.

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How many WASPs does it take to screw in a light bulb?
--One.

There are two WASPs standing on the Brooklyn Bridge. The first one jumps into the water. What does the second one do?
--Calls the police to save him.

How can you tell the bride at a WASP wedding?
--She's wearing a beautiful white gown.

How did the WASP break his leg?
--Skiing.

When at the neighborhood tavern, what does a WASP drink?
--The usual.

How do you kill a WASP?
--RAID.

How do you drive a WASP crazy?
--Slash the tires on his golf cart.

The Gospel Of The Making Of MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN

It was one of those opportunities that only arises once in a lunchtime.

"How would you like to go to Tunisia with Monty Python for the shooting of their new film?"

Managing an immediate "Yes!" even before the question had ended, I immediately packed my bags, arranged a flight and would up last minute details at home before flying out of O'Hare within the week.

I see a bit of explanation might be in order lest the more gullible reader assume this is a part of everyday existence for nearly everyone. It's a bit more complicated.

My association with Python all began in 1975. Not long after the shows premiered, Monty Python and the Holy Grail opened in Chicago, and I met Terry Jones and Graham Chapman at the premiere. I stayed in touch, corresponding with Terry, and the next year I journeyed to New York, where the group was appearing live on stage. Terry introduced me to the rest of the group, and again I stayed in touch.

Fall 1977. It hit me. Why not a Python fanzine? Let there be The Complate Monty Python, and in April 1978, there was, at least Volume One. Python response--favorable. August 1978. Howard visits London and Wales to gather material for Volume Two. Has fantastic time. Just as Howard returns to the soybean field of the Midwest, more good news. An invitation to come to Tunisia with the group to help compile material for a book of the film. Howard accepts. Immediately. Bringing us up to date.

The city of Monastir, Tunisia is a cross between a typical North African community very similar to those pictured in travel folders, complete with sand, camels, and Arabs, and the type of tourist town friends advise against "if you really want to see the country." The area is fast becoming Westernized, and indeed, the leading industry is tourism. Tunisia is trying to attract film companies to the country, certainly part of the reason Python decided to film there. Parts of Star Wars were filmed in the southern desert of the country, and Franco Zefferelli filmed most of his Jesus of Nazareth is Monastir on the same site Python has chosen to film.

The majority of the film was shot at or near a single location, a centuries-old castle in Manastir called The Ribat (Arabic for, what else, castle). The Ribat is one of the nation's top tourist and religious attractions, yet the government allowed us to close it down for more than three months to film there. The unit ended up using nearly every inch of the castle for something or another, including several rooms for interior rooms and corridors, Pilate's forum, and the complete reconstruction of a marketplace.

Also during the stay in Monastir, several days were spent in the city of Sousse, about ten miles north of Manastir. Some of the exteriors were filmed against the huge, ancient city wall, and some corridors and Pilate's wife's bedroom were located in a smaller castle in downtown Sousse.

After the first five weeks in Monastir ended, the unit moved south into the desert to Gabes, for filming out in the desert at Matmata for the desert scenes. After just under two weeks of filming there, it was off to Carthage for some brief shooting for the coliseum scene, and the unit wrapped up all filming and began heading back to London.

It is going to be difficult to discuss the making of the film at this time for several reasons. First of all is the fact that Python is trying to avoid publicity united the release of the film, due to the potential controversy which may follow. It is felt that, although the film is not an attack on Christ, some small-minded ignorant persons may organize an attack on it before normal people can see the film for themselves, especially considering the way some of these small-minded, ignorant persons have elevated themselves to some influential positions. Therefore, I don't think I had better release much information on the film itself at this time, concentrating instead on the Pythons.

Another reason it is difficult to discuss the film is the length and content of the film itself. The filmed script runs about two hours and fifteen minutes, but most distributors don't want to handle a comedy film that runs much longer than ninety minutes. Although some other alternatives are being explored, it seems pretty likely that at least some editing will have to be done. So, I really have no idea which scenes will be cut out of the film and which will remain, making me reluctant to discuss any of them at great length for fear of confusion should they be cut from the final print.

And the editing will be a tricky job, much more so than Monty Python and the Holy Grail, because Brian is a much more unified film than Grail. The script is very tight, very funny, and very, very good. Simply said, the script concerns a young man living in Judea in 33 A.D. In order to impress a girl, he joins a revolutionary movement to throw the Romans out of the country and becomes involved in an incredible series of adventures. To say any more would chance spoiled some of the film. It will tentatively be opening in the States in late spring or early summer, and those who watch television, listen to the radio or read newspapers will be well-informed of it. All six members of the Python gang will be coming over to the States to promote the opening of Brian in various big cities across the country, so watch for an announcement in your area.

The January 17, 1979 issue of Variety had a five page ad (with photos) promoting the film. Write to Bill-Dale for copies. Distribution inquiries taken at EuroAtlantic, 26 Cadogan Square, London SW1X OJP. Telephone 01-5811265, Telex: 895 1338.

Terry Jones is serving as the director of the film, and is also playing Brian's mother, in a "glittering performance of the highest magnitude." Naturally, all six Pythons play a variety of roles. Terry Gilliam does quite a bit more acting than he usually does, appearing as a jailor, a prophet--if you can't recognize a character because he's so filthy and disgusting, it's probably Terry G. Graham Chapman plays Brian, a role which kept him busy throughout the filming in addition to his doctoring duties. A little-known fact, Graham is a qualified medical doctor, and he was called upon to serve in that capacity quite regularly (mostly for small ailments, such as stomach upsets and drinking the native water) Michael Palin noted that Graham had a practice going that any doctor in London would give his right arm for.

Michael, John Cleese and Eric Idle probably played the greatest variety of roles, such as revolutionaries, various un-named persons in crowds, Roman Centurions (John), militant Jew King Otto (Eric), and Pontius Pilate (Michael). The cast of supporting players were all top-notch as well, and all enjoyed playing a variety of roles. The female lead, Judith, is played by Sue Jones-Davies in her film debut, although she has appeared in various theatre and television projects in Britain and even is the lead singer in a rock band. She has been seen in America on PBS on Rock Follies--in the second episode, she plays a singer who sings with one of the three lead girls in a nightclub. She is married to Chris Langham (who was recruited to some acting in the film), who writes for The Muppet Show.

Graham's writing partner Bernard McKenna (who co-wrote The Odd Job) shaved his beard and played soldiers and revolutionaries, as did newcomer Andrew MacLachlan. Comprising the rest of the repertory players are Charles 'McKeown, featured in Across the Andes by Frog (a Ripping Yarn), Terrence Bayler, who played Rutles' manager Leggy Mountbatten in All You Need Is Cash, Gwen Taylor, who played Leggy's mother and Chastity in the same show, and John Young, who played in Grail. Python newcomer John Case plays Pilate's wife in a scene that has to be seen to be believed, and yes, even Carol Cleveland is in it. Carol came down for a week in Manastir and a week in Gabes, and her husband, Peter Brett, became involved with acting. Even a green kid named George Harrison was dragged in and given a line before we wrapped. (Harrison, by the way, is one of the producers of the film)

There is one sad note, Keith Moon was supposed to do some acting with the unit. Keith passed away about a week before he was schedule to leave.

The sets and the scenery for the film are terrific. All of the props, costumes and makeup are perfect down to the last detail, and everything is as authentic as possible (including the dead octopi I had to stand next to for several hours while doing some acting in the middle of the hot Tunisian afternoon) . Terry Gilliam, in addition to acting, is also serving as art director for the film, seeing that every set looks perfect. Terry says the film is taking on the feel of an epic, with a scope Cecil B. DeMille might have been proud of: in fact, considering the locations, the sets and the atmosphere of the picture in general, Brian may become the first comedy epic.

Filming is generally never glamourous or exciting, and for the most part this was the case with Brian. On the average, we worked five and six day weeks, with an average of twelve hours a day. Many days lasted longer, and some shorter, but even so there was usually always some preparation needed at night for the next day.

Despite this, morale remained high throughout. We managed to stay on schedule for the most part (something that seldom happens in filming), and the cast and crew were all enthusiastic. Nearly everyone was there because they wanted to work with Python --several of the crew members told me that they passed up other, better paying jobs because they liked working with the group so much. In addition, viewing the rushes at night generally kept morale high, due to the quality of the footage--they looked good, and everyone could tell.

The Pythons adapted fairly well to Tunisia as far as getting used to the leisurely pace of life, as most of the natives displayed a reluctance to hurry about anything, with the exception of driving cars (although taxi drivers, naturally, take as much time as possible and the longest route possible when their meter is running). It did take a bit of time to get used to the waiters, though. The night before filming began, about a dozen and a half of us had decided to dine in the hotel restaurant, and had still not gotten our food after about an hour and a half. Eric Idle drafted an award on a napkin for "The Worst Service Ever in a Restaurant, Anywhere" and passed it around for all to sign. A few hesitated signing, with producer John Goldstone the most adamant against. Obligingly, Eric forged John's name in large letters at the very top, a signature John had to admit looked very authentic.

Language was not a great problem, even though most of the natives only spoke Arabic and French. Enough of the unit spoke French (or picked enough of it up) to get along fairly well. John Cleese observed that his major problems were with his drivers. He said he is at the point where he is only extremely proficient in a few phrases. When he uses them though, his drivers automatically think he speaks fluent French, and begin talking at great lengths about how glad they are to find somebody they could talk with. John then has to interrupt them and try to get them to slow down.

The future of Monty Python, post-Brian? Well, the general attitude seems to be that after the film is released and the publicity tour in early summer 1979, Monty Python will collectively sit back for three years or so before attempting another group project. They will be doing quite a bit individually, though. While Monty Python will stay together as a group, it will be a loose-knit, informal group, and while there will not be another television series, there will be more films.

PYTHON

IT'S ... Monty Python News

The individual members of Python have been extremely active, with most of their projects rearing their heads soon. Taking things alphabetically, Graham Chapman's new film opening in England in October and will hopefully be seen in the States before long. Entitled The Odd Job, Graham stars as a man who attempts suicide when his wife leaves him, but can't quite bring himself to do it. He hires an odd job man to do the job for him, after which his wife returns and he realizes he still has a man out to kill him. I was lucky enough to see nearly a final print of the film with Graham, and it's very good--and as well as starring in it, this is also Graham's first stint as a producer. The bulk of the writing was done by his old writing partner, Bernard McKenna, though Graham did do some script-work.

Graham is also writing what he is calling A Liar's Autobiography, which will more or less be the story of his life. This is a project that has been in the works for quite some time now, but perhaps could finally see completion this spring or summer. Graham is also kicking around several ideas for scripts with Bernard, though all are top-secret at the present. In addition, for the more medicinally inclined, Graham does some writing for medical journals, being, believe it or not, a fully qualified medical doctor.

John Cleese, in addition to his Xicom industrial films and commercials, is currently filming a second series of six Fawlty Towers. Filming should be finished sometime in March, and the shows could possibly make it over here to PBS as early as the fall. For those interested, the ABC-TV pilot Snavely, with Harvey Korman and Betty White, was fully authorized by John. His only regret is that it didn't make it as a series, as "it would have been the easiest money I ever earned."

Terry Gilliam has several projects going, including two films and a book. He is working on one of the films in an advisory capacity only, helping out three young artists on an animated feature tentatively titled 1884--What Might Have Been, which he describes as a Victorian Star Wars. So far, a half hour version been put together to show to possible backers, though as of this writing no backer has been found. Terry is also putting together a book of animation titled Animations of Mortality, featuring much of his Python material, as well as a great deal of other items. It was released in England last fall, and should be out in the States this spring. Also, in extremely early stages is a new film combining live-action and animation, with a possibility of using models, stop-action and other techniques. It will be co-written by Charles Alverson, who worked with Terry on Jabberwocky. For more information on Terry be sure to check the Terry Gilliam and Charles Alverson interviews in Volume Two of The Complete Monty Python.

Eric Idle, in addition to hosting a Saturday Night Live not long after his return from Tunisia, has a film of his own going. This will be Eric's production of The Pirates of Penzance. Eric has also released a post-Rutles single with Ricki Fataar as "Dirk and Stig" in England, and there are rumors of an album.

Terry Jones and Michael Palin are working on another six Ripping Yarns, the first series of which were shown on PBS last fall. A Ripping Yarns book, with the scripts from the first six shows, was released in England last fall, and will hopefully be out in the States this spring.

Terry Jones has finished two other books which will be out this year. Fairy Tales will be out at Christmastime, and is a delightful collection of children's fairy tales. Terry had originally written them for his daughter's bedtime stories before deciding to set them all down in a book, one which I highly recommend for children of all ages. Terry has also completed his rather scholarly study of out this spring. Terry is also keeping busy editing the Brian film, which he directed this fall.

Michael Palin, in addition to Ripping Yarns, is talking with producer Lorne Michaels about a future property. Michael hosted the January 27th Saturday Night Live.

And now--the commercial. If you've read this far, you probably have at least a passing interest in Monty Python, and friend, have I got a deal for you...The Complete Monty Python, Volume Two is out! And available for $2.75 from me, Kim "Howard" Johnson, 1411 Cherokee Lane, Ottawa, IL 61350.

Radio

THE NATIONAL LAMPOON RADIO HOUR was produced by the makers of Nat Lamp from sometime in 1973 to December 1974.

The show lasted a half hour, was syndicated, broadcast late at night. It cut from bit to bit, ala Monty Python, although certain shows had a unifying theme such as "The California Show" "The Canadian Show" or "The Welcome Back the Death Penalty Show" Nothing was spared, parody included everything from old time radio to talk shows, from Cat Stevens to The Who, public service messages, commercials. Most of the shows contained a "Laugh From The Past" in which they played an old Spike Jones classic like "Cocktails for Two" or did their own version of a classic.

GOLD TURKEY contains a best of the radio hour collection, including the great Flash Bazbo Space Explorer, who explores space with his sidekick, Dr. Narco; the Intelligent Thermos; the Immigrants, a great parody of ethnic origins documentaries; a Public Disservice Message and much more. GOODBYE POP is a collection of songs and song related material from the radio hour. THE MISSING WHITE HOUSE TAPES is the radio hour treatment of Watergate, and there are two other albums, LEMMINGS, based on the Lampoon stage show, and RADIO DINNER, which also included sketches from the radio show, and is by far, the best of the Lampoon records.

(A note. Lampoon has just released NATIONAL LAMPOON'S GREATEST HITS, which is a collection of cuts from the above 5 albums, and the latest, THAT'S NOT FUNNY, THAT'S SICK, which is from the latest Lampoon stage show)

The cast and crew of the National Lampoon Radio Hour included Chevy Chase, Gilda Radner, Bill Murray, John Belushi, Michael O'Donaghue, Christopher Guest, Brian Doyle-Murray, Sean Kelly, Brian McConnachie, Ben Fried, John Wall, Leon Janney, Windy Craig, Doug Kenney, Ed Subitsky, Polly Bier.

The radio show has also been the source of some of the material on Saturday Night such as the story of Johnny and his date backing into a snow bank and dying in his undershorts as told by the priest at one of the St. Mickey's K of C skits.

If anyone has any further information or tapes of the original shows (especially the earlier ones), please contact: Chris Sargent, 15 Kensington Drive, Chelmsford, MA 01824, or Bill-Dale Marcinko.

Gong Show creator Chris Bearde is producing THE RADIO SHOW, a satire based on a standard radio format, disc jockey (Don Steele), etc. It will be a syndicated special.

TERRY GILLIAM ON COMICS

Terry Gilliam is certainly the Python with the closeat links to the comic book/fantasy scene today, having been raised in the US and, in addition to being a top-rate cartoonist and animator, worked on the late lamented Help! magazine with Harvey Kurtzman. While interviewing him for the second volume of The Complete Monty Python, talk turned to comics.

"Are you able to keep up with the comic book and fantasy things coming out now? What do you think of the things coming out today?"

Terry: "The stuff that I really get most excited about is Metal Hurlant, the French one. The American one is Heavy Metal, but basically they just buy the stuff in Metal Hurlant and reprint it and translate it. They don't always use the best stuff in it, but its about the only way people are going to see that stuff, and I think that's about the best stuff going anywhere.

"I like it more than Conan and things like that--I think those are well-drawn and exciting things, but there's a whole other world...I don't think they've printed some of the stuff I think is the better--there's a guy named Marseilles who's in Metal Hurlant--he's just amazing. And Druillet, well, he's in Heavy Metal...and Moebius...he's wonderful. I mean, these guys, I just think they're incredible. The sort of worlds they're drawing are better than anything I've seen anywhere else, they seem to be so far ahead of--well, nobody in the States is really drawing anything like that, are they? At least, I haven't seen it if they are.

"I stopped off in Paris before I went down to Tunisia and found this shop that had lots of old Metal Hurlants. They were selling them cheaply, and I bought as many as I could. It's much more intelligent stuff as I think about it, it's very political stuff really. The stuff from the States seems to be a lot more Bash! Pow! Crash! , it's the action stuff, and slightly less intelligent, I think. And they're really great draftsmen, great artists.

I've stopped buying Heavy Metal now, because invariably I get the French ones before I get that. I actually like the French ones because I can't read French very well, It's a bit more exotic than reading it in English, where you get a translation that sort of sounds like standard comic book dialogue. Reading the French is more fun."

JANUARY 16, 1979, ENTRY 5.

I have my salvation.

I knew Eric Sanderson in high school. I sat across from him in English. He would always doodle [draw?] in his notebook, not on the cover, but on the inside. When the teacher or a student would pass by, he would cover up what he had done, as if it was somehow secret and private and for his enjoyment alone. We would talk in fragment speech; Eric would always lean his head back and "Yeahhh" in a deep, vibrating way, and when he smiled his face would crinkle up, revealing layers of meaning in lines of tight, tan skin.

We hadn't kept in touch much since. For some reason (perhaps my luck is changing), he invited me over to his apartment.

I took LSD.

Everything I have said about drugs was wrong. It is okay to change the nature of your reality if this one does not suffice. It is the ultimate act of rebellion. If you cannot make the outside a paradise, the least you can do, is make your insides a paradise.

Drugs are the next step in evolution. And I, I talk about change, I was so stuck in old thoughts, old concepts.

Hey, I loved pot. I loved mesc. I loved Eudes. I loved LSD, too. God knows what I was trying to prove when I condemned them all, and Jesus, right here in AFTA, too. I'm wrong--you should take drugs whenever you want. That may be the only way to find the paradise of which I often speak.

Robin Williams

Robin Williams, flanked by the greatest assemblage of non-talent (Conrad Janis has to be one of the greatest non-actors of all time), has singlehanded taken a somewhat inferior tv show with a tiresome premise (shades of My Favorite Martian) and turned it into a dazzling weekly roller coaster ride. MORK AND MINDY is the funniest new show of 1978, probably in many years, and Robin Williams must be reckoned with in the front rank of comedians.

What does Robin Williams do, exactly?

He fires out bad jokes, sf jokes, hip slogans, snatches of tv commercials and bad tv shows, stupid puns and striking improvisations at a manic pace. If nothing else about Williams excites you, you have to admire the man's speed. He is wound up and ready to explode when he goes into a routine, which thankfully, the powers to be let him do often on MORK AND MINDY. His routines (which he ad-libs) do more than rescue the show. They make it MUST WATCH (and MUST WATCH over and over again) television. Few shows do that for me this year (M*A*S*H, All in the Family, and We Interrupt This Week are the only examples I can think of for me).

The character he plays on the show, Mork, from the planet Ork, is perfect for him. Withdrawing and blurting out "heavy sigh" or "oh, rejection" in a kind of twisted hip R.D. Laing, he is far more endearing and lovable than that Steve somebody (who?) or any of the new comedians rising these days. With multi-colored suspenders, a striped shirt right out of Charlie Brown, baggy pants, puppy dog eyes, a twangy voice, and his uncanny knack of molding his face like putty, curling his lip, lowering his head slightly, he delivers what would, from anyone else, be trite dialogue, he turns it into a new experience. He manages to be outrageous, surreal, but at the same time, touching, sad, and innocent. He is the Ultimate Kid, trying to win you over and make you like him. Hey, I've been taken in. But I love him.

He approaches the dialogue and situations on the show with a freshness, insanity, and child-like awareness that elevates the show to a completely original entity. It works on many levels--Williams can make you laugh, dazzle you, but also, in his child-like way, almost make you cry. One minute he is rifling along, then he turns things around--everyone goes silent. When he kisses Mindy or delivers a killer line in his innocent way, you melt. You want to pet him, or hug him, or something. (The Christmas show, let it be stated for the record, almost had me in tears--something alas, tv does not often do- I rarely cry at tv or movies).

The writers (and of course Williams, to whom credit for the better lines must go) use the premise of Mork as an alien and foreign to earth's customs as a way to expose the hypocrisy and meanness of Earthlings. This is not a vicious condemnation of our morals, in fact, far from it (but far more effective). The show works on a simple, child-like level. If you're open to him, Robin Williams will go right past the screen and into your heart.

Mork is the ultimate innocent--he doesn't understand the pretense and secrecy of Earth life and laws. Each show, he learns something new about us. Too, he gives up a part of his innocense, and we, agonizing, watch as he reports back what he has learned to Orson. Also, Mork has no emotions in the traditional sense (Williams, lacking emotions, turns in a brilliantly emotional performance), and you have a Spock-kind of situation, in which you can slowly see Mork evolving and feeling. (But he feels as a child feels, with naivete and innocense)

We, as Earthlings, can't measure up to his simple interactions--and Mindy and Fred are constantly rescuing him from the clutches of us Earthlings.

One of my favorite shows is one in which a bully challenges Mork to a fight, and Mork, being non-violent, pleads with him not to hit him, but not for his sake. On Ork, the person who initiates the violence is the shamed one, not the one who refuses to fight. "Oh, please don't humiliate yourself" Mork pleads with the bully.

Or when Susan, along with Tom Poston's neighbor Hickley, one of the better semi-regular character, who is a snobbish, catty girlfriend of Mindy's who arranges a date with Mork to make Mindy jealous--Mork greets her at the door with "I took a bath. Did you?" and later, instead of buying her flowers, gives her five dollars instead.

Also, Mork has been monitering Earth only through it's tv signals, so he has a broad knowledge of tv. His awareness of Earthling's is only that which has come through tv. He slips into tv evangelists, used car dealers, and litters his language with references to tv commercials ("What are you doing, Mork" asks Mindy. "Taking the fear out of being close.")

Robin Williams, as Robin Williams, is making it as a comedian (which he had been long before Mork--a long-haired, hip foul-mouthed, dirty Lenny Bruce on speed (with none of Lenny's talent)). He plans to record a comedy album. And in the month of November 1978, Home Box Office tv featured him in an "On Location" concert special. Freed from Mork he proved himself well. Creating a surreal display of characters, voices, and sound effects, grounded in trash culture and sf movies, he was brilliant (he still does the best beeps, buzzes, and whirrs I have heard, Robert Klein's woo-woo notwithstanding)

Right away he shattered his clean tv image by littering his routine with that-awful-language-that-you-aren't-allowed-to-say-on-tv. He stepped down into the crowd mumbling, "Assholes to the right of me, assholes to the left of me". Looking out in the audience, he says "There are some people here I've slept with TWICE." Returning to the stage, he asks "Any Hell's Angels here tonight? Those big leather dumbfucks."

He does a blues singer (along the lines of his Jason Shine for AMERICA 2-NIGHT) "Woke up the other day/Ran out of Perrier", parodies Shakespeare, directs a scene from "Attack of the Killer Chairs", imitates George Jessel on acid and Laurence Olivier on Ripple, ("Dis is Rord Rripple for Orrivier Wine"), plays a wonderful tv evangelist (which bears a striking resemblance to Ohio's own Ernest Angley --which you should hunt down on Sunday morning tv if you want a real/surreal experience) called Ernest Lee Sincere, who promises his flock a "butchin' disco time". He does a good Mister Rogers, not playing him as a child molester (ala National Lampoon's "THAT's NOT FUNNY, THAT'S SICK") but rather as an ecologist/anti-nuke gone mad. "Let's put Mr. Hamster in the microwave." (a small explosion) "Know why I did that, boys and girls? Because we're all doing to die of radiation."

He portrays a strange old man named Grandpa Funk, in hip Ginsberg/jazz talk, laments about World War III and feeding methadone to the pigeons. Here he comes closest to revealing himself, and his philosophy on life: That madness may be the only thing that can save us now. As Grandpa, he tells his audience to go "Full tilt-bozo" because governments don't know how to deal with madness. (Aside: In an interview with Rona Barrett on tv, which I missed, (drat), I heard he spoke of the need for people to let loose in a kind of madness).

At the conclusion of the show, the invited John Ritter (of "Three's Company") up from the audience, and they improvise a routine. All the time they tease, tickle, and romp around like two 6 year olds. Not only did this redeem John Ritter from my hate list (I do NOT like THREE's COMPANY), but it proved once and for all that child-like, lovable character Robin Williams plays on MORK AND MINDY isn't that far away from the real Robin Williams.

It's sure as hell comforting to know, that as everyone is growing up with a passion, that there are some kids still left.

Nah-nu, nah-nu.

--*Bill-Dale Marcinko*

Mork & Mindy Index

Producers: Dale McRaven, Bruce Johnson
Executive Producers: Garry & Tony Marshall
Music by Perry Botkin & Ben Canzarone.

REGULAR CAST

Mork.....Robin Williams
Mindy.....Pam Dawber
Fredrick McConnell, Mindy's father.....
.....Conrad Janis
Cora Hudson, Mindy's grandmother, Fred's mother-in-law.....Elizabeth Kerr
Eugene, Mork's "main munchkin"Jeffrey Jacquet
The Voice of Orson.....Ralph James
--Exidor (Robert Donner) and Hickley (Tom Poston) have appeared on two shows each.

#1: "MORK AND MINDY HOUR SPECIAL" (9/14/78)
w: Dale McRaven; d: Howard Storm.
Mork, an inhabitant of the planet Ork, arrives on Earth to study human behavior. He is found by Mindy McConnell, who takes him home with her. Mindy believes him when he says he is an alien, but no one else does, and he is tried for insanity. Psychiatrist: Dick Yarmy, Judge: Michael Prince, Fonzie: Henry Winkler, Laverne: Penny Marshall.

#2: "MORK MOVES IN" (9/21/78)
w: Lloyd Turner & Gordon Mitchell.
d: Howard Storm.
Old fashioned Fred doesn't want Mork and Mindy to live together.

#3: "MORK RUNS AWAY" (9/28/78)
w: April Kelly; d: Joel Zwick.
Mork feels that he is in the way of Mindy's social life, and runs away to join the "Friends of Venus" Exidor: Robert Donner.

#4: "MORK IN LOVE" (10/5/78)
w: Lloyd Turner & Gordon Mitchell; d: Harvey Medlinsky.
Mork finds true love--with a department store mannequin.

#5: "MORK's SEDUCTION" (10/12/78)
w: Neil Lebowitz; d: Harvey Medlinsky.
One of Mindy's old enemies hopes to make her jealous by arranging a date with Mork. Susan: Morgan Fairchild; Customer: Bruce Fisher.

#6: "MORK GOES PUBLIC" (10/19/78)
w: David Misch & April Kelly.
d: Joel Zwick.
A reporter offers Mork a great deal of money for an inside scoop on aliens. Clint: Jeff Altman.

#7: "TO TELL THE TRUTH" (11/2/78)
w: April Kelly; d: Joel Zwick.
Mork overhears people saying polite things about a mean landlord after his death, assumes they are sincere, and brings the man back to life. Wanker: Logan Ramsey; Mrs. Wanker: Fay Dewitt.

#8: "MORK THE GULLIBLE" (11/9/78)
w: Neil Lebowitz; d: Howard Storm
When a criminal is left with Mork for five minutes, Mork lets him go because he believes the man's story about his sick mother. Dittman: Dan Barrows; Exitor: Robert Donner, also...Ed Bernard, Dana Hill.

#9: "A MOMMY FOR MORKIE" (11/16/78)
w: Tom Tenowich; d: Howard Storm
Mork uses his age-reducer on himself to demonstrate to Mindy what it would be like to be married and have kids. Dan: Barry Van Dyke.

#10: "MORK'S GREATEST HIT" (11/23/78)
Mork is challenged to a fight by a bully in a restaurant where he is having lunch. George: Brian James.

#11: "OLD FEARS" (11/30/78)
w: April Kelly; d: Howard Storm
Mork masquerades as an old man to comfort a lonely Cora.

#12: "MORK'S FIRST CHRISTMAS"
w: Dale McRaven & Bruce Johnson; d: Jeff Chambers.
Mork goes Christmas shopping with Eugene, but finds out that he can't buy much for $12. He decides to make personalized gifts instead. Susan: Morgan Fairchild; Salesman: Dave Ketchum.

(12/21/78)-Repeat of "Mork Runs Away" (#3)
(12/28/78)-Repeat of "Mork's Seduction" (#5)
(1/4/79)-Repeat of "Mork in Love" (#4)

#13: "MORK AND THE IMMIGRANT" (1/11/79)
w: David O'Malley & April Kelly.
d: Howard Storm.
Mork meets a newly arrived Russian immigrant who casually mentions he's an alien, and Mork naturally thinks he's one of the outer space kind. Sergei: Tim Thomerson; Immigration Bureau Agent: Ned Wertimer.

#14: "MORK THE TOLERANT" (1/18/79)
Mork teaches Mindy the importance of kindness after she blows up at a noisy neighbor. Hickley: Tom Poston.

The STEVE MARTIN CONCORDANCE

Why is Steve Martin so popular?

Probably more than any other comedian, the Steve Martin 'look' and 'sound' is integral to his comedy. People 'do' Steve Martin. It is not his jokes which are funny, but his pose. In fact, if you look at the jokes he does, much of it is pretty standard stuff. It is his persona, and his persona alone--his voice, his way of standing, his way of moving, that has made him, hey, a popular comedy star.

Some observations: Steve Martin embodies every drunk partygoer who put a lampshade on his head or tried to sing or tell jokes, but ended up instead just making an ass of himself. Steve Martin is funny because he presents the cool, confident, completely in control persona of the Las Vegas showman with the deep, announcer voice. But the slickness and smoothness of the professional entertainer is cracked in a number of ways. He makes mistakes, he stumbles into the microphone, he says peculiar things, the routine does not follow the logic and fluidity of the Las Vegas comedian. Steve is self-conscious of where he is, what he is doing--he is nervous, and he lets everyone know. This establishes a curious bond with the audience. Before you know it, everyone is doing Steve Martin.

(A footnote: Having followed Steve Martin since his early Tonight show and Merv Griffen days, I am getting really, hey, I'll say, tired of hearing the same routines over and over and over again and hey, I'm paying and paying. I'm out here. Sure, I paid the $8.98 list for the new Steve Martin album, only to find stuff I had already heard years ago, and I don't think it's too much to ask, hey EX---CUSE ME. Sure I'm pissed.)

It is really hard to try to describe Steve Martin. The pure manicness and absurdity of his act makes a long theoretical article impossible. Sooo... I offer instead the near complete Steve Martin Concordance. A note: since Steve rarely works the routines over word for word each time, I have taken the album versions to be the definitive vocabulary and syntax. In fact, those routines you can hear on record I have marked accordingly. (1) means it's from 1977's LETS GET SMALL. (2) means it's from 1978's WILD AND CRAZY GUY.

This Concordance only covers the stand-up comedy Steve Martin does in concert. I did not include a transcript of his Saturday night appearances, the script for THE ABSENT MINDED WAITER, or his tv special, although I realize that he wrote a good deal of the material for those. And as always, I welcome your additions and corrections to this.

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THE CLASSICS:

"Excuse me."

"I'm just a wild and crazy guy." (Or "I'm a wild and crazy kind of guy.")

"I'm a ramblin' guy." (Or "I'm a ramblin' kind of guy.")

(Warning--I am very tired of these. You must not do them over the phone or if you see me in person. If you do, I will do terrible things to you with a fork)

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PROPS & VISUALS

Rabbit ears, nose glasses, the arrow through the head, and balloon animals (you make bizarre things like deformed cows, and VD germs)

Here's something you do see very often. (scream loud like a savage and leap into the air) Arrrrggghhh!

(To be done in large halls) Can you see up there in the balcony all right? (Answer is usually "No!") Ha ha ha ha. Nine, nine-fifty. Uh, you'll be able to see all right ...I'd like to open with the magic dime trick

I've got...happy feet. (Dance around the stage at this point) (2)

I'm looking for a girl to do this, (intertwine fingers in obscene fashion)...and then maybe we'll get into some of this...and some of this.

Could I have a volunteer from the audience? What's your name? Okay, you never met me before, right? (Right.) Ever talked to me before? (No.) Then how do you know it's me? Oh, I love good comedy. What's your sign? (Taurus.) Okay, let's see...I'm a Feces...I'm taking from the deck the King of Hearts and replacing it backward just like this. (insert card into the deck so that just the tip is showing) When you feel the vibes are just right, I want you to say out loud, 'King of Hearts come down and dance.' All right? Now, everyong has to concentrate on the King of Hearts, I wish you would all get into this, because this will be...oh...something to do. So you got it? When you feel the vibes are just right, 'King of Hearts come down and dance', nice and loud so the King can hear you. (pause--King of Hearts come down and dance) (pluck the card from the dance and do a little dance with it on your arm and the microphone), Do do do, doodle doodle, do do do do...

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THE SHORTER STUFF

Hey, let's be somebody tonight, huh? You wanna do something really weird? Let's go murder someone!

Well, enough comedy jokes.

Oh, I love good comedy.

I'm into the comedy thing.

Well, We've had a good time tonight, considering we're all going to die.

Hey, this guy is good.(1)

To open the show I always like to do one thing that is impossible. So right now I'm going to suck this piano into my lungs. (1)

We're having some fun. (1)

How many people are here tonight? (1)

Sure I'm pissed. (1)

I've been delaying here a few minutes. I'm just waiting for the drugs to take effect.

I'll be out here in just a minute. (1)

Is this on? Is this mike on? (bang the mike loudly) (1)

Okay, let's get moving now...We're really moving now. (1)

Solutions to the parking problem? That's simple. Death penalty for parking violations. (1)

This is...comedy! (1)

We're gonna get to the meat of the act pretty soon. Just sort of coasting. (2)

I'm a neat guy. (2)

More wine. (2)

Excuse me, I just went to the Bahamas for a second/I just lost my mind for a second

Have I started yet? (2)

(in reply to a question or comment from the audience) Yeah, I remember when I had my first beer. (2)

I was thinking about that the other day while doing terrible things to my dog with a fork, (2)

This is creativity in action. It isn't often you can pay $4.00 to see someone jack off like this. (2)

I think you should always take a girl out to dinner before you use and degrade them.

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THE LONGER STUFF

A lot of people think, hey, Steve, you're a ramblin' kind of buy; you must meet a lot of girls when you're on the road. And I'd like to dispel that rumor, it's just a myth about entertainers, and it's really kind of a...lonely life; I spend a lot of lonely nights back at the old hotel and...well, after so many lonely nights, you develop some, uh...well, let's say...pretty weird, uh, sexual outlets. I like to, uh...I like to, uh...I like to wear men's underwear! And you know, I'll come into a town like this, and uh...I'll resist for a couple of days... then I'll start getting that, uh...feeling. I'll go down to Sears or somethin'; I'll wander in--first I go over to the stereo department, 'How much is this? Is that a hi-fi?' Then I'll wander over to the undergarments department, and uh...buy some..men's underwear; you know, I'll tell 'em it's for a friend of mine...take it back to the hotel, and I'll...put it on. And then sometimes I'll put it on...under my clothes. And I go out to a restaurant or some place--nobody knows I have it on! IT'S WILD! I'm wearin' it right now! Naw, just kidding!

Okay, you paid the money, you're expecting to see a professional show, so let's not waste any more time, here we got with Professional Show Business, let's go, hey!

Hey, I know it's a lot of money to get in here, and uh, I want you to feel like you're getting your money's worth, so...what I'm going to do is...massage every member of the audience.

(If a person leaves to go to the bathroom) Tell ya what, when he comes back..we'll play a joke on him. I'll go into this really dumb monologue, with no punchlines...and you laugh like crazy, like they're the funniest jokes you've ever heard. And he'll think that he's wrong. 'Gee, must be good, I dunno.' So when he comes back, I'll give you a clue like this. (secret wave of hand) Fake jokes: Wouldn't it be funny if you went home to repair your TV, and there was a banana in it? / Fella comes home, opens his refrigerator, and there's a clown in his refrigerator. Well, he looked at the clown, the clown looked at him--the fella says, 'I didn't expect to see you in there.'

Still $4.00 to get in? That's nothing in today's world, with inflation. Oh, I got four dollars, I think I'll throw it out on the street. Oh, I can come in here for $4.00. What happens? (1)

This is not Las Vegas. It's $15.00 to get in, but it's worth it, 'cause there's a million things going on, and everything's moving real fast. You can't understand a word they're saying, but it doesn't matter. You sit there, "Oh, wow. Look at the tits. I'll get there's 57 tits." The opening act in Vegas is always like a pop singer. (go into a routine with high speed banter) I'd like to do a couple of gambling jokes...I gotta be me...Sammy Davis, Jr, a personal friend of mine...It's impossible, it's impossible to put a piano in your nose, it's just impossible...The hills are alive with the sound of money...

We're into the intellectual scene up here. It's an intellectual town. Things are always happening to me that are so above everything else. Before the show, a couple came back and asked me if I was 'bi.' And, well, I studied a little Spanish in high school, but not enough to really be 'bi.' I said, yeah, I'm bi. And they said, we'd like you to come over after the show, because we've got some S & M people coming over. I said, oh, great. Spaniards and Mexicans. It would be great to go there after the show and speak a little Spanish and have the intellectual thing, which is what I'm into. (1)

You paid $4.50? It's a good investment. Sometimes I come out here and do a $4.75 show, or I do a $5.00 show. If you paid $4.50, I don't do a $4.25 show, I keep going. So you may make a little bread off this tonight. (1)

I'm into bread. I love...money. I love everything about it. I love to eat it. They say you can't take it with you. I'm taking it with me. (1)

I bought some pretty good stuff. I got a $300 pair of socks, I got a fur sink, oh, let's see, electric dog polisher, gasoline powered turtleneck sweater. Of course I bought some dumb stuff, too.

I'm on drugs, hey. I love to...get small. It's a wild, wild drug. Very dangerous for kids, cause they get...really small. I know I shouldn't get small when I'm driving. I was driving around the other day, and a cop pulls me over, and he goes, "Hey, are you small?" I said, "No I'm tall, I'm tall." And he said, "I'm gonna have to measure you." I got a little test they gave me, it's a balloon, and if you can get inside it, they know...you're small. And they can't put you in a regular cell, 'cause you walk right out. One night I got really small and got inside a vacuum cleaner. And the drug wore off. I became the shape of the vacuum cleaner for two weeks. It was wild to...get...small. (1)

You say to me, Steve, how did you get your start? Was it easy for you on the way up? I started off at the bottom. I was born a poor black child. And all day long around the house I'd sing the blues. Then I heard my first Montavani record, and I knew that this was where it's at for me, the kind of music I enjoy. These are my people. So I

STEVE MARTIN

decided to become white. I had my cock shortened. And I got a job as a television weatherman. It was a slow change. I'm still black from the neck down.

I don't like to gear my material to the audience, but I'd like to make an exception, because I was told there is a convention of plumbers in San Francisco this week, and I understand about 30 of them came down here. So before I came out I worked up a joke especially for the plumbers, so those of you who aren't plumbers may not think it's funny, but those of you who are plumbers will really enjoy it. This law supervisor was out on a sprinkler maintenance job. And he started working on a Finley sprinkler head with a Langstrom seven-inch Gangley wrench. Just then the little apprentice leaned over and said, "You can't work on a Finley sprinker head with a Langstrom 7 inch wrench." This infuriated the supervisor, so he went and got Volume 14 of the Kinsley manual, and he reads it to him, and says, "The Langstrom 7 inch wrench can be used with the Finley sprocket." Just then the little apprentice leaned over and says, "It says sprocket, not socket." Were those plumbers supposed to be here this show? Okay...sure I'm pissed. (1)

I don't do any dirty material. Are there any kids here tonight? I don't like to offend people by doing those 'fag' jokes. I don't like to offend people, and you never know who might be in the audience. Well...how many fags do we have in the audience? Just a couple? Okay...these two fruits are walking down the street... (1)

I've had such a good time since I came here to ____. It's an intellectual town. Yesterday I went to the Turd Museum. They have some great shit there. I guess some of the crap's worth a lot of money. (1)

I don't take drugs. I used to, in the old days, everybody would get stoned. The whole audience would be stoned. I'd walk out stoned. And people would be watching me "Hey, those guys are pretty good." They'd talk to me after the show. "Hey, wanna smoke some shit?" "No, I don't want any marijuana." "Marijuana, this is shit. I'm smoking my own shit." (1)

I was real naive in those days. People would come backstage after the show, and say, wanna snort? I'd go sure... (snort like a pig). I wouldn't smoke marijuana in California now. You can get a ticket for that.

I have figured out something. Muggers do not like to rob you if they think you are crazy. 'Cause they're afraid they'll have to explain. Taking too much time, standing there "Okay, one more time...I take the money, you give it to me, I'll run off, and you won't have the money, and you'll yell for help." "HUH?" So all you have to do is look crazy. So whenever I have like 10 dollars and I want to walk down the street with it, first I wet my pants. I get a big stain. Then I take a baby carraige and push it down the street and put garbage in it. Now, if you don't want to get that involved, the moment you are aware that you are being robbed, throw up on your money. "We'll pass, get you next time, old buddy." (1)

If I'm in a restaurant and I'm eating, and someone says, "Mind if I smoke?" I say, "No, mind if I fart? It's one of my habits. Yeah, they got a special section for me on airplanes now. I quit once for a year. But I gained a lot of weight. It's hard to quit. After sex, I really have the urge to light one up.

You ever start talking to someone and you forget what you are going to say, and you go, "ahhhh... Gee, I was going to say something, but I forgot what it was." And they always go, "Well, it must not have been very important or you wouldn't have forgot it. Ah ha ha ha ha ha." I always say, "Oh, I remember, I'm radioactive." (1)

I'm taking up smoking. My doctor says I wasn't getting enough tar. The fun part of smoking is deciding what brand to smoke. Virginia Slims, that's a woman's cigarette. What do they have, little breasts on them or something? (1)

I guess I'm kind of thinking about my old girlfriend. We were together about 3 years. Sometimes when I get on stage I think about her, 'cause she'd travel with me. I could hear her laugh. Kinda meant something to me. I kind of miss her. Oh--she's not living anymore. You think that's funny? I guess I kind of blame myself for her death. We were at a party one night. We weren't getting along. We were fighting. And she began to drink, and she ran out to the car, and I followed her out. And I guess I didn't realize how much she'd been drinking, and she asked me to drive her home. And I refused. We argued a little bit further, and she asked me once again. I didn't want to, so I shot her...With a shotgun (sound of explosion), cut her right in half. Ha ha (1)

I'm so mad at my mother. She's 102 years old, she called me up the other day, she wanted to borrow $10.00 for some...food. I said, hey, I work for a living. So I loan her the money, I had one of my secretaries take it down. And yesterday she called me up and said she can't pay me back for awhile. I said, what is this bullshit, right? So I worked it out, I'm having her work on my transmission. And if she can't fix that, I'm having her move my barbells up to the attic. (1)

Could I have a little mood lighting on this...I'm going to do something that's a little departure for me. A blue spot. Hello. Nobody back there. Just thought there would be somebody back there. I guess they figure, closing night, it doesn't make any fucking difference. I'm kinda pissed off about this, because it's been going on all week. You see this club has been in the business about five or six years. It was the Troubador at first, then it became the Boarding House. There's a lot of...hip-pees working here...I can understand the drug thing, you know...they think it's more important to take the drugs than do a good show. I'm just up to here with this. It's just that I'm on stage, it's my ass out here, and I come out, and I'm giving, and giving, and I'm giving, and I give some more, and I make a simple request. I say could I possibly have a blue spot? But I guess the lighting crew thinks they know a little more about show business than I do. Although I've been in the business a few years, and I think I know what works best. I'm sorry, but I am angry. I come out here and I can't get any cooperation from the backstage crew. EX--CUSE....ME! (1)

(From the second album and later concerts) If you bought my album and you came down here expecting me to do a lot of routines from the record, there's a reason for that. I think performers have to move on. You can't do the same old material over and over and over. It's kind of cheap to rely on the same stuff. If you don't agree with me, well, EX--CUSE....ME! (2)

I gave my cat a bath the other day. I always heard you weren't supposed to give cat's baths. But he came home and he was really dirty, so I decided to give him a bath. If you have a cat, don't worry about it, they love it. He enjoyed it, it was fun for me. The fur would stick to my tongue. Other than that... (1)

I'm not into the drug scene or the booze scene, or the dope scene. And I think people that are should be taken out and maimed. (1)

You know a lot of people come up to me, and say, Steve, how can you be so fucking funny? There's a secret to it. No big deal. I'll be honest. Before I come out, I put a slice of baloney in each one of my shoes. So when I'm on stage, I feel funny. People come up to me, they say, Steve...Martin, is there some way I can be funny, too? Well, here's a couple of jokes I'd like to pass on to the crowd. And these are jokes you can play on your friends, if you enjoy the good practical joke. Next time you go out with your friends, you secretly put an atom bomb in your nose. And when you get there, you pretend that you are going to sneeze. You go, aahhh, aahhh... and set off the bomb...(make sound of explosion). Next time you're invited to an elegant dinner party, you arrive late, so that everyone's there, and you walk in and throw all the food on the floor. I did this at the last party I went to, about six years ago.(1)

How many people ski? Oh, perfect. Here's a joke you can do on the ski lift. You know how people engrave their names on their skis? So that when they get stolen, they know who they got them from. They call you up and thank you, "Ted Robinson, thank you very much." The next time you get on a ski lift with a stranger you look over and get his name. And you wait till you get about halfway up, then you suddenly turn to him and pretend like you've known him all your life. You call him by his name, and they just can't figure out who you are. It's just so much fun. I did this last winter to a guy. His name was RENTAL. (1)

You've been great. I want to thank each and every one of you for coming by. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you etc. (1)

You've got to laugh once a day. That's why I feel proud to be up here, a semi-professional comedian, providing laughs. Laugh once a day, 'cause a day without sunshine is like...night. (1)

I would like to tell you what the Maharishi Guru taugnt me over 15 years ago. Maharishi was a personal friend of mine, and I studied with him for 15 long, long boring years. I didn't really learn that much, but the day I was leaving, the Maharishi said something to me I've never forgotten. Whenever there's a crowd of people like this, I like to pass it on. A day has not gone by that I haven't thought of this particular thing. The Maharishi said, "Always..." wait, no it was "Never..." "Always take a litter bag in your car. It doesn't take up much room. If it gets full you can just toss it out. (1)

I think there's nothing better for a person to come out and do the same thing over and over. This is what I enjoy. So I'm going to do the same thing over and over ...I think I'm going to do the same joke over and over in the same show. This will be a new thing. (2)

I'm not trying to be a big shot or anything, but I get my drinks half price. That's right, for every drink you buy, I get...two. So I can have just about as much as I want, and it doesn't affect me (stumble)

I went to college. I studied philosophy and psychology...How many people studied philosophy in college? You see they can never raise their hand. Like half way, because they're so confused, after two years. I studied the great philosophers: Socrates. Plato. (pronounced "Soh--crats" and "Plah-toh") If you study geology, which is all facts, as soon as you get out of school, you forget it all, it's just numbers and things. Philsophy, you remember enough to screw you up for the rest of your life. You study the important ethical questions: Is it okay to yell "movie" in a crowded firehouse? Religious questions: Does the Pope shit in the woods? (2)

I keep waiting. If there is a God, give me a sign. See, I told you there was--(suddenly go into mumbling in a foreign tongue). Wouldn't it be weird if you died, and woke up, and you were in heaven? Just like they always told you. Everybody had wings on. Pearly gates. Would you feel stupid? Oh, NO! You mean that....ohhhh! In college, they said this was all bullshit. You've been keeping records on me? I wasn't so bad. How many times did I take the Lord's name in vain? Oooóo, a million six. Jesus Chr-- (2)

It's hard to believe in anything anymore. It's like religion, you can't really take it seriously. It's so mythological, and seems so arbitrary. On the other hand, science is pure empiricism, and by virtue of it's method it excludes metaphysics. I guess I wouldn't believe in anything it if wasn't for my lucky astrology mood watch. (2)

College. You feel so small. You go to college and study about guys like Leonardo, who did everything. A great painter, a great architect, you feel like an idiot. I wanted to expand my life in the way Leonardo did, so I took up juggling. I know what you're saying--Where do you find time to juggle? Well, I juggle in my mind. Whoops! Leonardo's MONA LISA. They say, oh, that's not so great. But not a lot of people know this. But MONA LISA was painted with one stroke. (2)

STEVE MARTIN

I have book coming out. I'm pretty proud of it. It's kind of a serious work for me. It's called HOW TO GET ALONG WITH EVERYONE. I didn't write it by myself, I wrote it with this other asshole. I did BAD BANANA ON BROADWAY. How many people read that? Just a few. CEREMONY FOR A FAT LIP. Oh, I did RENEGADE NUNS ON WHEELS, DYKES ON FIRE, HOW TO MAKE MONEY OFF THE MENTALLY ILL, HOW I TURNED A MILLION IN REAL ESTATE TO $25 IN CASH. Oh, I wrote MIND GONE HAYWIRE, I'LL TAKE THE ALPHABET, TROUBLE IN DOGGIE LAND. HOWDY DOODY--MAN OR MYTH?, THE APPLE PIE HUBUB. THE APPLE PIE HUBUB was a significant novel for me, because that was when I first started using verbs. My novels really brightened up after that. (2)

There's a little child there. How old is he? Two. I have a joke for him. These two lesbians are walking down the street...

I'm into language. This is my thing. Language is the most important...ah...I think you know what I'm trying to say. If you go to college, study the English language. So few people can really speak with... pizzazz. I think you know what I'm trying to say. We've got communication going here. We're into something. And this is not drug induced, this is real. I've never had this feeling before. Feel it? (2)

If you don't have a command of the language, it's nothing to be embarrassed about. Let's face it, some people have a way with words, other people...oh, not have way, I guess. (2)

You have to have a command of the English language, or you're nowhere. Let's say you get to college, and you're gonna go into business, a bank. You've got to give it the right name. It's got to be something big and strong, like SECURITY FIRST TRUST AND FEDERAL RESERVE. And you have to name a bank that, 'cause no one's going to put their money in FRED'S BANK. Hi, I'm Fred. I have a bank. You've got $1,600? I'll put it here, in my white suit, right in the pocket.

I got a great dirty trick you can play on a 3 year old kid. You see kids learn how to talk from listening to their parents.. Whenever you're around them, talk wrong. And now it's like his first day in school, and he raises his hand, "May I momba dogface to the banana patch?" Give that kid a special test. (2)

I was in Paris about two months ago. Let me give you a warning if you're going over there. "Chapeau" means "hat." "Ooph" means "egg." It's like those French have a different word for everything. You never appreciate your language until you go to a foreign country that doesn't have the courtesy to speak English. I'm thinking, no problem, English is a universal language. So I get off the plane and get into the taxi, and say to the driver, "I'd like to go to a hotel, please" and the driver says (French phrase-- I cannot transcribe French, I took Russian in high school because I thought the Communists would take over and I would have no one to talk to) What? What is that you're saying? Ha ha. The first thing you do, which is really dumb, is you adopt a French accent. I would like to go to ze hotel. So I went out and bought a little French phrase book, hoping to memorize it, but French is not like Spanish, where you can sound it out. Casa de pepe? But French is like (says a phrase then chokes on it). What happened? He spoke French. Help him! So the only thing I could remember was cheese omelet. Omelet du frommage. I'm practicing all the time. Omelet du frommage. I go into the restaurant and the problem is if you order in French, the waiter thinks you speak French, and (say French phrase). Yes. He brings a shoe with cheese on it. And you also told him to force it down your throat. I'll have a shoe with cheese on it, and force it down my throat, and I want to massage your grandmother. I learned it's all sound effects. I went into a restaurant and I wanted to order milk, eggs, and ham. So I go (make sound of cow mooing, chicken clucking, and pig oinking) (2)

(To audience) Don't worry, I get it, I know what you're saying. You people are paranoid. Paranoid. I know what you're saying. Let's talk about the comedian behind his back. I see where you're at. That doesn't bother me. I don't need you. I can do this act alone. I often do. I'm gonna do the act for my parents. Take out the dirty stuff. (2)

I have to do the comedian's financial disclosure. I don't like doing this, but I have to. Okay, a lot of percentages, manager and agent 30-35%, road expenses 10-20%, development of new material .00001 percent. I made that all up on a pie graph. Then over here I have a rubber chicken graph. Then I figured out potential concert income. To fill up a 3,000 seat hall, at $3.00 per ticket, it grosses $9,000. If you fill up a 3,000 seat hall at $7.50 per ticket, it grosses $22,500. And just for fun, I figured out if you filled a 3,000 seat hall at $800 a ticket, it grosses $2,400,000 and this is what I'm shooting for. One show...goodbye.(2)

Hi, crimstoppers. Usually, we say, "Hi, Steve." One more time. Hi, crimestoppers. (Hi, Steve). Let's repeat the crimestopper's oath (the audience obediently repeats it after him). I promise not to bully my friends...I promise not to leave my keys in the car...I promise not to depreciate non-taxable items brought forth from the previous tax year...Good. And now, let's repeat the Non-Conformist's Oath. I promise to be different...I promise to be unique... I promise not to repeat things other people say... (2)

I recently purchases my own form of private transportation, which landed at the airport this morning. We'll be landing the station wagon out here at the airport. (2)

Part of the money I'm taking in tonight will be going to charity. I never announce this ahead of time, because it always sounds like a phony deal. I do a lot of work with unwed mothers. I'm just helping them get their start. (2)

Actually I love animals. There is something which is going on in other countries which disgusts me. Some people think it's a sport. I happen to think it's cruelty to animals. I'm talking about, of course, cat juggling. They take little kitties, 10, 12 weeks old...They juggle them for money. Of course the poor little kittens are going me-ow, me-ow... (2)

And there's something going on in Kansas now that makes me sick. They take laboratory mice, never hurt anybody, they take them out to Hollywood, and tell them they're going to be in pictures. (2)

I gotta be honest with you. You probably read it in SCREW UP YOUR LIFE MA-- I mean PEOPLE magazine. I used to smoke...marijuana. But let me tell you something, I would only smoke it in the late evening, oh, occasionally the early evening, but usually the late evening, or the early evening. Occasionally early afternoon, or the late afternoon, perhaps the late to mid afternoon. Oh, sometimes the early-mid-late morning. BUT NEVER AT DUSK...

I feel sorry for women, and I'll tell you why. So many men think they're into this weird sex. And I'm sorry. In fact, there's something wrong about that. But I met a girl, she was taking singing lessons, and her coach, an 84 year old guy, the last guy in the world to be weird, but listen to this: He kept wanting her to sing through her diaphram. I mean, that would take years to learn that. (2)

Now this doesn't happen very often, but about 3 weeks ago, I met a girl. She was real nice, and she invited me to her apartment, and she has the best pussy I have ever-- OH, NOW COME ON. I'm talking about her cat. Now this makes me sick. You can't say anything anymore that people don't take it dirty. And I'm sorry, that disgusts me. That cat was the best fuck I ever had. (2)

How many people have cats? Now let me ask you this. Do you trust them? Because I got to get a pair of cat handcuffs and I got to get them right away. Just the little ones that go around the little front paws or maybe the manacles that get all four paws. I found out that my cat was embezzling from me. You think you know a cat for 10 years and he pulls something like this. He would go out to the mailbox, pick up the checks, go down to the bank, and cash them. Disguised as me, with a little kitty arrow through the head, and the little kitty bunny ears. And I wouldn't have caught him, but I went outside to his house, where he sleeps, and there was about $3,000 worth of cat toys out there. And you can't return them 'cause they have spit all over them. So now I'm stuck with $3,000 worth of cat toys. Sure, they're fun. Got the little rubber mouse, got the bell inside of it. Ha ha ha ah ah ah ha. Boy I hate it when it goes under the sofa! Whoaa-- gimme that, gimme that. (make cat hissing sound) (2)

I was thinking about when I was in high school. I was a real normal kind of guy in high school. I was on the football team, I was a quarterback, and I quit after two weeks. And I'll tell you why. I had my own strategy. I would punt on first downs. So I quit and became a cheerleader, and that was really fun. I got my first experience standing up in front of people, and I got my first writing experience. I wrote cheers for the team. But the other cheerleaders were so dumb. They would not use one of my cheers. "Die you gravy sucking pigs." And "Try to make a touchdown you scum-bags." (2)

With prices today I wanted to buy some carpeting. You know what they want for carpeting, $15 a square yard. I'm sorry I'm not going to pay that for carpeting. So what I did-I bought two square yards and when I got home I strapped them to my feet. (2)

I know a lot of you people are wondering, you're saying, Steve, you're a ramblin' guy. You've been travelling around from town to town, not knowing anybody, staying in a different hotel every night, and I got----went crazy, went crazy----and I came into L.A. early a couple of days ago, and bought a house, bought a car, met a cute gal, got married, we have a little baby, another one on the way...(2)

(Done in the European Sex God/Czech voice) Many people come to me, and they say, hey, how can you be such a swinging sex god? Well, I'll tell you. It's not that because I can make love up to one time a night. It's not because I say the things a woman wants to hear like, "Are you through yet?" It's because I know how to read a woman. If she is like a cat, I have kitty litter. If she is like a dog, we do it on the paper. But I'm also a unique guy, too. The kind of guy that likes to have his own special scent. Not to smell like every other guy. I like to have my own individual odor. That's why I wear tuna fish sandwich. I put a tuna fish sandwich under each arm, maybe one or two behind the ear. I don't smell like any other guy. And it's economical, too, because the smell lasts for four or five days. (2)

You Americans are so naive. You have so many naive and simple ways. Like when you break up with a girl, it's a big deal. But where I'm from, we have a very simple and mature way of doing it. You walk up to the girl and say, "I break with thee, I break with thee, I break with thee," and then you throw dog poop on her shoes...Then my brother and I we go to the crazy swinging singles bar, and we look for the girls with the dog poop on their shoes. "I noticed you had a little dog poopy on your shoe." Many people come to me, and say, what kind of girl do you want to meet. Well, I just want to meet a girl with a head on her shoulders. I hate necks. That way when we go to a fancy restaurant, and I walk in with her, every head turns. Except hers, she has no neck. (2)

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BANJO FUN

Isn't that a happy sound? You just can't sing a depressing song, when you're playing the banjo. You just can't go, oh, death, and grief, and sorrow and murder. When you're playing the banjo, everything is okay. Hey, Steve, your house is burning down...I always thought that the banjo was the one thing that could have saved Nixon. If he went on television at the right time, and said, "Hi, everything's great." Wouldn't it be great if he was travelling around the world, and he got off the plane, and said, "I'd like to talk about politics, but first, a little Foggy Mountain Breakdown..." And he'd go to foreign countries, and he'd get off the plane, and people would go, hey, do

STEVE MARTIN

Foggy Mountain...I don't like to talk about Nixon, it's so old. Kind of like making Ike jokes. I feel sorry for him, I know I shouldn't. He did wrong. But I see him walking along the beach in San Clemente, all by himself, big ol' shorts on, with a metal detector. (1)

I think people who are out of work, instead of giving them money, you should give them a banjo. "Honey, did you get a job today?" "No, (plays banjo), doesn't matter though." Doesn't it seem that Carter should have a banjo. "Oh, yup, yup, yup yo" What do you think of unemployment? "Oh, yup, yup, yup." (1)

When you're with me, it's like being at Shaky's Pizza all the time.(1)

SONGS

(Singalong) Okay, everybody. Now just the ladies. Now, the men. Now this half of the room. Now this half. Now this 2/5. This 2/7. Now, in Chinese. (1)

We're having some fun here at the ____. We've got music, we've got laughter, we've got wonderful times. It's only $4.00, every five minutes...This is such a hard chord. Sure I could make the easy chord. To make the full chord you have to play part of it with your nose...But you know I see people going to college for 14 years, studying to be doctors and lawyers, I see people getting up at 7:30 every morning and going to work at the drug store to sell flair pens. But the most amazing thing to me, is I get paid for doing this... (1)

INDIAN FOLK SONG: You probably heard I was into the comedy thing. But I'm getting out of that and into the music. I'm getting into the folk songs of the American Indian. I've jazzed it up a little bit, given it that 'pop' feel. I'd like to do it for you now. This could be your introduction to this form of music I love so much: "Hiya, hiya, hiya, hah, hah, woaa, woaa, hiya, hiya, hiya... little girl." (1)

"I'm in the mood for love" (while choking)

"Grandpa bought a rubber..." (2)

GRANDMOTHER SONG: You know, folks, when I was a kid I was very close to my grandmother. And she used to sing a song to me when I was so high, and it's always meant something to me, it does have meaning in today's world.. All these years, even during the hip drug days, when everybody was supposed to be so cool, and double meanings, this simple little tune would keep coming back to me. It kind of guided me through those years. I'd like to do this song for you now, it might have a little meaning for you...

(Sing twice, the second time asking the audience to repeat the lines)

Be courteous, kind and forgiving
Be gentle and peaceful each day
Be warm and human and grateful
And have a good thing to say

Be thoughtful and trustful and childlike
Be witty and happy and wise
Be honest and love all your neighbors
Be obsequious, purple and clairvoyant

Be pompous, obese and eat cactus
Be dull and boring and omnipresent
Criticize things you don't know about
Be oblong and have your knees removed
Be tasteless, rude and offensive
Live in a swamp and be three-dimensional
Put a live chicken in your underwear
Go into a closet and suck eggs.

KING TUT (Parenthetic lyrics are sung by the Toot Uncommons)

(King Tut, King Tut)
Now when he was a young man, he'd never thought he'd see (King Tut)
People stand in line to see the boy king (King Tut)
How'd you get so funky? (Funky Tut)
Did you do the monkey?
(Born in Arizona, Moved to Babylonia, King Tut, King Tut)
Now if I'd know they'd line up just to see 'em (King Tut)
I'd 've taken all my money and bought me a museum (King Tut)
Buried with a donkey (Donkey Tut)
He's my favorite honky
(Born in Arizona, Moved to Babylonia, King Tut)
Dancin' by the Nile, the ladies love his style (Boss Tut)
Rockin' for a mile (Rockin' Tut)
He ate a crocodile (ooo, ooo, ooo)
He gave his life for tourism.
(Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut)
Golden idols
(Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut)
He's an Egyptian
(Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut, Tut)
They're sellin' you
(King Tut, King Tut)
Now when I die, now don't think I'm a nut (King Tut)
Don't want no fancy funerals, just one like old King Tut (King Tut)
He coulda won a Grammy (King Tut)
Buried in his jammies
(Born in Arizona, Moved to Babylonia, He was born in Arizona)
Got a condo made-a stone-a (King Tut)

Proctor & Bergman

Proctor and Bergman were the mainstay of Firesign Theatre. Since FT has broken up and lost their contract with Columbia, Phil Proctor and Peter Bergman have toured, released an album on Mercury, and are now working on a script for a film called AMERICATHON, which will star John Ritter and Harvey Korman. Neil Israel will direct. It's about a telethon by a future American president to raise enough money to prevent the US from being purchased by the United Hebarab Republic (the Arabs and Israelis)

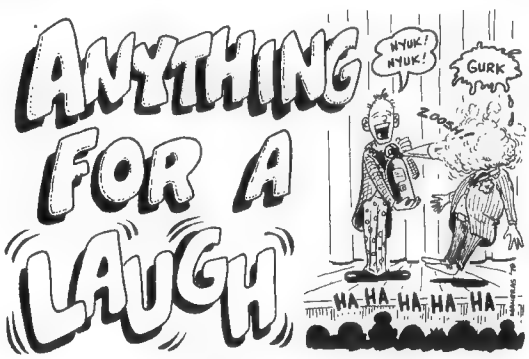
GIVE US A BREAK (Mercury SRM13719, 1978) consists of a number of short cuts (unlike the thematic Firesign Theatre albums) just as funny as their Firesign work.

Imaginative names, bad puns, and a keen sense for the subtlety of language is there. The album is almost patently relevant, at a time when non-topical absurdity of the Steve Martin variety is in vogue.

Cuts include "Hot Rock Radio" (All the hits, all the time, all the same. If the records weren't free, we'd be...all news). "Caruba" a car commercial (I love to drink in the lush, wine-filled interiors. I will be buried in this car). Then there's Arnold Brainduster, a memory guru who tells how to remember names (Dorothy Snowden becomes Toto Slushead, Pete Bergman becomes Relish Foot) A commercial for "Whale Oil" (The offsprings of the recent marraige of petroleum and nature (pop top fish, broken beer bottle fish travelling in packs of 6, with jagged teeth that can "Schlitz your foot off"). There's the UN Session from No Work City , "Lemon Car", a reggaebeat car commercial for RastaFord Motors (If you want to get that old lemon car fixed/In a strange land/ We've got to fix it together/Clean up this water pipe/Everyone of us together), tv & movie parodies ("Doggies", if cute can kill, they will. You think you're so safe, but they are playing everywhere in your neighborhood), "Nukes in the News" (Ned Bent of General Defective claims bad press and bad statistics has fueled the anti-nuclear protest ("I looked at the statistics the other day on nuclear safety, and they are really bad"). The "Saturday Night Gun Mart", "Sneezer's Chicken" and many other cuts round out the album. The boys are backed up the (gasp) Starland Vocal Band--many of the cuts have professionally produced tracks with music and everything!

It's nice to have them back again.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko



I want to tell you about my friend. His name is R----. 17th and 18th century writers used to use initials followed by a dash to create a sense of reality (or as English majors would say, verisimilitude) in their fiction, as if the people existed but they didn't want to reveal their names, so as to protect them from social embarrassment. I use it instead, to preserve a sense of fiction in my reality.

I knew R---- all through high school. He had large eyes, brown curly hair, a round face; the eyes had exclamation points in them. The single memory I have of him is to take any situation and turn it into a funny anecdote, a schtick for a stand-up. The more I got to know him, the less I did. I imagined him at home practising what he would say to people in a mirror. Still and all, I felt close to him. There is something about laughter which does that, inexplicably brings people together partially against their will.

The last time I saw him was at a party in the spring of my senior year. I was drunk, somewhat sullen, my tolerance to R---- and his constant joking was low. It occured to me that he was preventing people from getting close to him--using comedy to keep people at a distance. Staggering over to him, I said, half-eloquently, "R----, why is it that you turn everything into a joke? Someday, someday, you're gonna see what you're doing, you're gonna wonder why you don't have any friends, shit, you don't have friends, you have an audience--there's a difference, I don't want to be your audience--Someday you're gonna wonder why, and you're gonna put a gun to your head and blow your brains out."

Recently I found out that he did just that. That, dear readers, is the punchline.

I dedicate this new section of AFTA (which will appear every issue) to R----. I hope he likes the jokes. --Bill-Dale

TV COMEDY NEWS

Russell Myer's BROOMHILDA is being developed by Filmation for the 11 p.m. slot on independent stations. It's LIVE ACTION!

HOSPITAL STAY is an MTM M*A*S*H type comedy now being developed. MTM also has TRAPPER JOHN, M.D., an hour long comedy-drama (ala Lou Grant) starring Wayne Rogers. Writer: Don Brinkley. Producer: Frank Glicksman. From 20th Century Fox.

*M*A*S*H* may undergo a name change to THE NEW ADVENTURES OF M*A*S*H if the syndic markets have their way. M*A*S*H will be syndicated this fall with the title M*A*S*H, and they don't want any conflict. THREE's COMPANY, MAUDE, and RHODA will also be available in the syndicated markets this fall.

Now that Morris the Cat is dead, Sylvester (voice by Mel Blanc, natch) will do the new Nine Lives cat food commercials.

MR. MIKE'S MONDO VIDEO will be an NBC special on March 3. Gilda Radner, Dan Ackroyd, Jane Curtin, Carrie Fisher, and Margot Kidder join him for his off-center world tour.

NATIONAL ENQUIRER will do NATIONAL GRAFFITI series which will turn up late as a special on ABC. Produced by Danny Arnold ("Barney Miller"), and anchored by Steve Landsberg.

NATIONAL LAMPOON has signed with Home Box Office (the subscription cable-tv unit which runs movies uncut) to do special broadcasts solely for them. HBO also has four Allen Funt specials planned (which will be more adult than the CANDID CAMERA tv series).

SOUPY SALES will return with a daily half hour show, via syndication, with new material.

TAT Communications is piloting THE BEN STEIN MONEY SHOW. It stars Stein, a Lear writer, as an economist. TAT is also planning a feature film vehicle for Martin Mull and Fred Willard (as Barth Gimble and Jerry Hubbard), ala the Bob and Bing road movies, although work has not yet begun on them. Norman Lear and WCVB in Boston have aired a show called THE BAXTERS, a soon to be syndicated series in which a cast of actors portray a problem in a typical American family, and the live studio audience talks about it.

THE TV SHOW written by Harry Shearer and Martin Mull will be an hour long tv special for ABC. Stars Brett Somers, Billy Crystal, Rob Reiner, Mull and Harry. If you can't guess it's a satire on tv programming.

UPTOWN SATURDAY NIGHT is being developed as an NBC pilot.

TV COMEDY REVIEWS

TV-COMEDY 1978: The new shows: The most amusing new show of the year is PBS's WE INTERRUPT THIS WEEK. Hosted by Ned Sherrin (who did "That Was The Week That Was" many years ago), and manned by snobbish, snide, and high class people like Linda Blandford, Richard Reeves, and Eugenia Zuckerman, it is sort of the flip side of THE MATCH GAME. The show is often blackly funny, surreal and very clever. Points are awareded for correct answers or "to teams who are evasive in an inventive, charming, or provocative manner." The show is at once a satire of game shows, and a forum for topical jokes on current events (Marshall Brickman, Woody Allen's writing partner, and National Lampoon's Jeff Greenfield are amazingly funny). However, WITW has been cancelled, after a short reprieve for 5 weeks in February. I urge you to write your PBS station to urge them to fund this program.

Speaking of PBS, THE FALL AND RISE OF REGINALD PERRIN, a show from the BBC, circa 1976, is an excellent import showing up here and there on some stations. A kind of FAWLTY TOWERS in the business world, Reggie plays a manic middle-aged executive slowly going crazy. His fantasies, ala Walter Mitty, which appear briefly, as short film clips, especially a shot of a hippo (whenever he thinks of his mother-in-law) add a great touch.

On the networks, already cancelled is APPLE PIE, a strange show which didn't have a whole lot beyond the strangeness to offer; and IN THE BEGINNING, with McLean Stevenson as a priest and Priscilla Lopez and a liberal nun, from Norman Lear. Very funny at times, especially those people who like Catholic jokes, the show didn't click, primarily because it lacked a supporting cast to set off (and upset) McLean.

Much superior to that, HELLO, LARRY, with McLean Stevenson (this time on NBC) as a radio talk show host, overflows with smart-ass kids (ala ONE DAY AT A TIME, the producers are the same) and fat jokes. I kinda like it.

WKRP IN CINCINNATI and TAXI are the two MTM Productions. It's obvious that MTM has compromised somewhat to the Kotter and Charlie's Angels mentality--WKRP sports a dumb blonde with big tits, Taxi a number of Travolta clones--Tony Danza paramount. The ensemble comedy still works, much better in TAXI than WKRP, although Howard Hesseman as Johnny Fever steals the show. A craggy, bloodshot Martin Mull type character, Fever was called Johnny Sunshine until he lost his job in L.A. when he said "booger" over the air. My favorite moment was the old woman who smashed a Bob Segar record with her umbrella. One sore spot: KISS here is seen as revolutionary rock and roll. A small point, I know, but still.

DIFF'RENT STROKES. There should be some kind of law against fat, cute child actors like Gary Coleman and Mason Reese. You can only take Coleman in small doses. Once a week for 20-odd minutes is far too much

JOE AND VALERIE. As mindless as the disco culture it portrays.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS. NBC's ANIMAL HOUSE rip-off. It's soooo bad. Annoying background soundtrack, overbearing laugh track.

DELTA HOUSE. What do you get when you assemble a Belushi lookalike (Josh Mostel) and the original cast from ANIMAL HOUSE, put a package together that resembles the original but is lacking in charm, originality, and comic timing? Yup.

NBC's TURNABOUT is a smart, witty comedy that succeeds because of the brilliant performances of John Schuck and Sharon Glass, who play a married couple who switch bodies.

SATURDAY NIGHT has degenerated beyond belief with this season's entries. Everyone seems tired and only half interested in what they are doing--they are reworking old plot lines; Steve Martin is just plain dull; they need new blood through and through (writers and performers). If they have any decency, they'll cancel the show now. SECOND CITY looks better and better on the other hand. The syndicated MADHOUSE BRIGADE is just simply embarrassing to watch.

FILM COMEDY

DAN ACKROYD and JOHN BELUSHI have both signed three-picture deals with Universal. A BLUES BROTHERS film will be one of the first ventures.

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON will be directed by John Landis. Production begins in July.

BANANA is the title of Joan Rivers' next movie. She'll write the screenplay, which will be based on her years as a stand up comic (shades of *ANNIE HALL!*).

EASY MONEY stars Steve Martin. Martin & Carl Reiner are working on script; Reiner will directing. Filming began in Feb. 1979.

FAMILY DREAMS stars Richard Pryor.

THE FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH is a basketball comedy with Jonathan Winters, Flip Wilson, Stockard Channing.

HOT STUFF has Dom DeLuise as director and star.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES will star Peter Cook and Dudley Moore.

HOLLYWOOD AND LEVINE is a detective story set in 1947 Hollywood, featuring a young Richard Nixon in the Hollywood blacklisting events. Peter Stone scripts, Sidney Lumet directs.

THE IN-LAWS, directed by Arthur Hiller, and starring Alan Arkin and Peter Falk, will be released June 15, 1979.

MARTIN MULL's first album on Elektra will be called MULL BECOMES ELEKTRA. He is doing THE MARTIN MULL STORY, PART I for Orion, and working with Norman Lear on another film for Universal (probably the F2N vehicle as Barth)

IN GOD WE TRUST will be written and directed by Marty Feldman.

THE JOY OF SEX has Dudley Moore as writer/director.

LEMMINGS will the film of Nat Lamp's old stage show. Sean Kelly and Tony Hendra (who scripted and directed the play) will do the screenplay. Following the success of ANIMAL HOUSE, Nat Lamp and Universal have 4-picture deal going.

LITTLE ANNIE FANNY will be brought to the screen live action, courtesy Playboy Productions.

MAIN EVENT is a romantic comedy starring Barbra Streisand, Ryan O'Neal, and Paul Sand. Jon Peters produces, Howard Zieff directs from a script by Gail Parent and Andrew Smith. Opens June 22, 1979.

MANHATTAN is Woody Allen's next film. He directs it, stars in it with Diane Keaton, Michael Murphey, Muriel Hemingway. Woody and Marshall Brickman wrote the script. Will be released this Spring.

THE MAN WHO LOST TUESDAY is a comedy thriller by Colin Higgins ("Foul Play") He will write and direct it.

NO KNIFE is a western comedy starring Gene Wilder and Harrison Ford. Will be released in July or August 1979.

THE PRIZE FIGHTER stars Don Knotts and Tim Conway.

THE PRISONER OF ZENDA, written by Dick Clement & Ian La Frenais, stars Peter Sellers

A RICHARD PRYOR concert will be distributed as a film, via Plitt Theatres.

THE RETURN OF MAXWELL SMART, budgeted at $6 million, written by Arne Sultan and Bill Dana, directed by Clive Donner, began production January 1979 for Universal. Don Adams, Barbara Feldon will return. Edward Platt (Chief) will not. He is dead.

ROUGH CUT will star Burt Reynolds. Blake Edwards (Pink Panther films) will direct, script by Larry Gelbart (M*A*S*H, OH, GOD).

SATURDAY MATINEE stars Chevy Chase. Script by Chase and Michael O'Donohue.

SIMON is a contemporary comedy starring Alan Arkin, screenplay by Marshall Brickman.

10, produced and directed and scripted by Blake Edwards, stars Julie Andrews, Dudley Moore, Robbert Webber, and Dee Wallace.

WHO SAYS NICE GUYS FINISH LAST with John Ritter, script by A.J. Carothers, will be directed by Martin Davidson (ALMOST SUMMER)

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN, to have been directed by John Landis (ANIMAL HOUSE) from a Jane Wagner script, and starring Lily Tomlin, has suspended production.

ANIMAL HOUSE. Directed by John Landis.

Fast-paced direction by Landis ("Schlock" "Kentucky Fried Movie"), a brilliant performance by Belushi and able support by the cast make this the funniest movie around this year. See it with a crowd, preferably rowdy, preferably drunk. It's a movie which celebrates rowdy, loud, and mindless parties. I planned to do a number on Animal House's success being indicative of American college student's desire to return to the days of the uninvolved, innocent 50's (which can't be done in the apocalyptic 70's without some consequence), but why bother? Just go out and see it and have fun. Being a college student, I will say a few things: No, it's not like that at college. But, yes, shades of the "art as a reflection of life/life as a reflection of art" school, toga parties have sprung up like mad, and the frats are imitating Delta House to a t.

CALIFORNIA SUITE. Directed by Herbert Ross.

This movie is schizophrenic. You have three segments, unfolded simultaneously through the movie, a generally conventional and unfunny slapstick with Bill Cosby and Richard Pryor that will set back race equality 50 years, a bitter, cynical New York vs. California debate done by Jane Fonda and Alan Alda (who looks old and fat), and the supreme segment, with Michael Caine and Maggie Smith as a British couple in town for the Oscars (Maggie plays a Glenda Jackson dark horse nominee). Maggie shines.

FOUL PLAY. Directed by Colin Higgins.

The Chevy Chase vehicle also starring Goldie Hawn gets only qualified praise. Very funny in spots, but also very labored in spots, like Writer/Director Higgins is trying a bit too hard to be funny. The film ends with a SILVER STREAK (which Higgins was responsible for) exertise in slapstick nee disaster movie (cars going through windows).

COMEDY CONTINUED

*HEAVEN CAN WAIT. Directed by Warren Beatty and Buck Henry...*The modern remake of HERE COMES MR. JORDAN with Warren Beatty as football player given body of rich tycoon after Heavenly error exudes such warmth and magic you can't help but fall in love with it. (I saw it 5 times). Charles Grodin contributes a wonderfully subtle performance and delivers my favorite line of the movie, "She relives it." The ultra-pessimistic ending with Jack Warden almost put a damper on things, however.

UP IN SMOKE. Directed by Lou Adler.

Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong, famous for their mildly-amusing-to-10-year-olds moron record albums, are featured in a strange movie. Someone cut out all the humor (was it the print I saw, perhaps?), I think. One large marijuana joke, Cheech and Chong babble through this totally worthless movie. Each scene, you should be able to think of a much funnier way it could have been handled (Sgt. Stedenko's scenes could have been hilarious, but such was not to be). Could this be a new trend in movies: Anti-humor?

Is 'Star Trek' Film Already Sold To ABC?

Hollywood, Jan. 30.

Introduced as a theatrical project by Paramount Pictures last March, rolling in production since Aug. 11, "Star Trek — The Motion Picture," it was learned last Friday (26), has been acquired for tv licensing by ABC-TV.

While the network won't comment on the tv licensing rights acquisition because of "legalities," an insider confides that the principal reason a formal confirmation can not be issued is the threat it poses to the boxoffice.

"Here's a picture," he points out, "which hasn't even been completed and it already has been sold to tv. That's got to hurt the box-office."

But ABC Entertainment keepee and g.m. Lew Erlicht, while moving not an inch towards confirmation of the story, maintained that generally — not specifically as it applies to "Star Trek" — the reason pre-buys of theatrical product are not announced has little to do with possible b.o. threat ("That's not really a factor"), but instead is traditionally a part of the contractual arrangement with the motion picture producer.

The investment to be protected with "Star Trek — The Motion Picture" is a considerable one. The budget on the Paramount feature is estimated to be $15,000,000, with special effects alone costing $4,000,000.

The pre-buy of the picture by ABC-TV is in keeping with the web's strategy, reiterated a number of times to the visiting consumer press tour last week, to make a corporate commitment to ensure a steady flow of top quality program product well into the 1980s.

COMICS & ANIMATION NEWS

Warner Bros. & the producers of BEATLEMANIA are doing a musical version of *ARCHIE...BON VOYAGE, CHARLIE BROWN* is the fourth Peanuts film, produced/directed by Bill Melendez, written by Schulz. In it, the gang travels to France; Snoopy stops along the way to play Wimbleton...*BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25th CENTURY* is no longer an NBC tv-movie; it'll be released as a theatrical film in April, from Universal. Gil Gerard plays Buck, Henry Silva plays Killer Kane...*CONAN*, budgeted at $15 million, will be produced by Edward Pressman for Paramount, to be released Christmas 1979. Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, script by Oliver Stone (MIDNIGHT EXPRESS, BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY), needs a director. Possibles: Alan Parker, Ralph Bakshi, John Frankenheimer, John Milius (who I hope gets it)...*Dino's FLASH GORDON* began production in Feb. 1979 with Michael Hodges replacing Nicholas Roeg as director. It has a budget of $34 million; a 30-40 week shooting schedule...Robert Towne will direct the Edgar Rice Burroughs' TARZAN adaptation, from his script. Titled *GREYSTOKE*, it is currently filming in Africa, for Warner Bros...21st Century & Universal are talking about an animated *HEAVY METAL...THE MICRONAUTS* (already a Marvel comic) may be filmed this year...*POPEYE*, starring Dustin Hoffman & Lily Tomlin, will be scripted by Jules Feiffer. Robert Evans is producer...Avco Embassy has got a Rankin/Bass production of *RUDOLPH'S & FROSTY'S CHRISTMAS IN JULY* for this summer, with the voices of Red Buttons, Ethel Merman, Mickey Rooney, Alan Sues, Jackie Vernon, and Shelly Winters...*SHEENA* with Raquel Welch is shooting on locations in South America...*TERRY AND THE PIRATES* is an Avco Embassy film currently in production in Hong Kong and Macao. Script: Michael Hughes, Director: Russell Rouse...*LITTLE ANNIE FANNY, MARMADUKE, THE PHANTOM, BEETLE BAILEY, CASPAR (animated), and PRINCE VALIANT (animated)* are all possible adaptations to film.

RERELEASES: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS will be re-released this Spring. Spielberg has edited out some scenes (the mash potato and mud-in-the living-room mountain building scenes), added others--including the "Wish Upon A Star" Jiminy Cricket ending to the film...*STAR WARS* will be re-released in August 1979...*THE EXORCIST and BLAZING SADDLES* will repeat their runs...*BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA* will be edited down to 2 hours from it's 3 hour premiere episode for release to theatres...A compilation of SPACE:1999 episodes will be sold to foreign houses as a feature, *DESTINATION: MOONBASE ALPHA...METAMORPHOSIS* (which sported a Joan Baez, Rolling Stone soundtrack) will be released as *WONDERMAKER*, this time sporting a D*I*S*C*O soundtrack...

*SEQUELS, REMAKES, SERIALS...*Steven Spielberg will do *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH KIND* for Columbia. Right now Stevie's working on *1941...THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, the sequel to STAR WARS, will be released in Spring 1980. Special effects by Brian Johnson (SPACE:1999), directed by Irvin Kirshner (EYES OF LAURA MARS). Production began in October 1978. Kurtz says that the Han-Luke-Leia love triangle begun in STAR WARS will be resolved... *STAR TREK--THE MOTION PICTURE* will have all the original cast returning, plus: Commander Willard Decker (Stephen Collins), the new Executive Officer, Ilia (Persis Khambatta, a former Miss India), playing the bald navigator Lieutenant. Robert Wise (THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, WEST SIDE STORY, AUDREY ROSE) is director; the screenplay is by Gene Roddenberry and Harold Livingston and concerns an all-powerful being which destroys Klingon ships at the beginning of movie, then proceeds at Warp 7 directly toward...Earth. The crew is reunited in Starfleet headquarters in San Francisco (we get a glimpse of the Trek Future Earth) and goes off to fight the alien. A new bridge, new costumes, and new sets are being constructed (including scenes on Vulcan). Production began in Oct. 1978. The film will be released December 7, 1979. Theatres are already bidding for bookings now. Budget is $15 million...*OMEN III* will end the series. The anti-Christ, now 30, will die. We will not see the promised apocalypse. Damn...*MOONRAKER* is the next James Bond film. Directed by Lewis Gilbert, music by John Barry. Stars Roger Moore as Bond, Richard Kiel, Lois Chiles. Filming now in Paris, Venice, Rio De Janiero at a $25 million budget. Will open July 4, 1979. The advance movie posters are so popular UA is printing 500,000 for retail distribution... United Artists is trying to stop production of *JAMES BOND, SECRET AGENT*, a project Ian Fleming began. Written by Kevin McClory, starring Sean Connery, the $20 million film, UA claims, bears too much of a resemblance to THUNDERBALL...*BEYOND THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE* stars Michael Caine, Sally Field, Telly Savalas, Peter Boyle, Jack Warden, Shirley Knight Slim Pickins, Shirley Jones, and Karl Malden. It's a disaster, er, about a disaster relating to an avalanche along the railway on the Alps. Script by Nelson Gidding, produced and directed by Irwin Allen, for Summer '79 release. Allen directed THE SWARM, which gets two awards from me, Worst Movie of 1978, and Best Line: "But I thought the bees were our friends."...*AIRPORT '79 CONCORDE* will be directed by David Lowell Rich from a script by Eric Roth, for Universal. Cast: Alain Delon, Susan Blakely, Robert Wagner, George Kennedy, Eddie Albert, Bibi Anderson, Cicely Tyson, Charo, Martha Raye (who is not dead, by the way), John Davidson, Jimmie Walker, and David Warner. Production began 11/16/78... *FRODO THE HOBBIT II* is a Rankin/Bass animated feature, a sequel to the 1977 Thanksgiving tv feature, having nothing to do with LORD OF THE RINGS. Voices: Orson Bean, Theodore Bikel, John Huston, William Conrad, Brother Theodore, Roddy McDowell, and Paul Frees...

THE DRACULA FILMS

Five Dracula productions, seven vampire films planned or in production...*Universal's DRACULA*, produced by Walter Mirisch, directed by John Badham (the director of SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER who directed a few NIGHT GALLERYs), will adapt the play, script by W.D. Richter (BODY SNATCHERS). Stars Frank Langella, Laurence Olivier, Donald Pleasance; Music by John Williams...*BRAM STOKER'S ORIGINAL DRACULA* will be directed by Ken Russell in asso. with Leonard Wolf (THE ANNOTATED DRACULA, A DREAM OF DRACULA)...Roger Vadim will direct a version of DRACULA, in addition to remaking Val Lewton's THE CAT PEOPLE (Larry "It's Alive" Cohen will write the script)...Marvel comics writer Bob Hall (who also wrote the play) is adapting *THE PASSION OF DRACULA*...*PRINCE DRACULA* is a $3 million comedy written by Nick Felix, filmed in Dallas...*NOSFERATU* will be remade by Werner Herzog and will star Isabelle Adjani. Made in Germany, it'll be distributed by Fox...*LOVE AT FIRST BITE* is a $2 million Mel Simon production...

ADRIFT AND BEYOND is a $4 million ghost ship adventure directed by cinematographer Bill Butler (his first film). It's about the discovery of a ghost ship, the "Blood Star" after being lost at sea for 20 years. Prod. began filming in Jan. 1979.

ARABIAN ADVENTURE is an Eastern magic/flying carpet tale starring Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Mickey Rooney, and Milo O'Shea. First production of Orion Pictures, the production company which resulted as a result of the split at United Artists.

ALTERED STATES, the Paddy Chayevsky novel, will be adapted with Robert Penn as director. The plot concerns a scientist/professor who experiments with mind-altering drugs to find the genetic time bridge between humans and their prehistoric counterparts. Dick Smith will be doing make-up, John Dykstra's Apogee Inc. (where Doug Trumball works) will do special effects.

THE ADVENTURES OF STELLA STAR is the new title of STARCRASH, the Italian film starring Caroline Munro as Eva, a heroine reminiscent of Barbarella. AIP will release in Fall '79.

THE ALIEN FACTOR, fanzine editor Don Dohler's film has been picked up by Gold Key Entertainment as part of a package of new sf movies for tv. Other titles include STAR PILOT, INVASION FROM INNER EARTH.

THE ALIEN will be released May 25, 1979 from 20th Century Fox. The interstellar space

thriller will be directed by Ridley Scott. Budget is $5 million. HEAVY METAL artist Moebius is advising in the production.

THE BLACK HOLE (formerly titled SPACE PROBE) is Disney's space epic about a mile long space ship which gets sucked into a black hole. Script by Jeb Rosebrook & Gerry Day; stars Maximillian Schell, Anthony Perkins, Yvette Mimeaux, Joseph Bottoms, Ernest Borgnine. Directed by Gary Nelson. Budget is $17 million, Disney's biggest gamble--they may even get their first PG rating. World of Disney will have a "Making of..." segment in Late 1979. Movie will be released Christmas 1979...

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS is from Roger Corman's New World Films. In their first big budget epic, they tell the story of a boy who must recruit mercenaries to save his planet. He travels from planet to planet.

BRAINSTORM is a combination mystery/sf film about a computer project by the name of Genesis controlled by a looney who is killing off people with it.

CHRONICLE TO ETERNITY is an upcoming sf film I know nothing about. Great reporting.

Orion Pictures has the rights to Robin Cook's (COMA) next book, whatever that is.

CONJURING will be produced by Herb Jaffe and directed by Nicholas Meyer (currently working on TIME AFTER TIME).

Peter Sellers will star in the first of a series (like PINK PANTHER) of *CHANDU THE MAGICIAN* films. Based on the radio character.

THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED is an Irwin Allen production, with a script by Stirling Silliphant and Carl Foreman. Paul Newman stars, Release is set for Christmas 1979.

Anne McCaffrey's *DECISION AT DOONA* will be filmed by producer Gary Youngman.

DOMINQUE is a psychological thriller directed by Michael Anderson, produced by Milt Subotsky, and stars Cliff Robertson. Milt's SWORD AND SORCERY films will also release a series of Thongor pics.

THE DARK is directed by John Bud Cardos, stars William Devane, Cathy Lee Crosby, Richard Jaeckel, & Keenan Wynn.

Frank Herbert's *DUNE* will be filmed by Dino De Laurentiis. Herbert is writing the screenplay. Work begins in June 1979, after FLASH GORDON is completed.

DEVIL FISH is being written and directed by Bert I. Gordon, the genius responsible for such classics as FOOD OF THE GODS and EMPIRE OF THE ANTS. Budget is $5 million, it features complicated underwater photography and mattes. "It's the biggest underwater adventure ever, absolutely the biggest," Gordon said.

THE EATERS OF THE DEAD will be written and directed by Michael Crichton, from his novel of the same name.

THE ENTITY, Frank (AUDREY ROSE) deFelita's newest novel has been sold to film. He will write his own script.

FRANKENCAR will be released by UA. Sf.(?)

THE FOG will be written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill, directed by Carpenter. He's the brilliant director of a film called HALLOWEEN and the ELVIS tv movie. From Avco Embassy, the release says "100 Years ago it moved across a small American town creating a terror no human being should ever live to see again! NOW IT HAS RETURNED." All-right!

THE HUMANOID, a $7 million film starring Richard Kiel and Barbara Bach will be released in 1979 by AIP, in Dolby Stereo (?).

THE HORRORIFIC MOVIE HOUSE MASSACRE will by directed by Paul Bartel (DEATH RACE 2000).

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE (by Anne Rice) may star John Travolta.

I, ROBOT, is budgeted at $30-$37 million, the most expensive sf film ever made. Produced by Edward & Mildred Lewis for Warner Bros., Harlan Ellison has written the 235 page screenplay, and Isaac Asimov (who wrote the book) loves it. John Frankenheimer & David Lean are being considered as director; Joanne Woodward is being sought as Dr. Susan Calvin.

JAGUAR LIVES! is a James Bond type film starring Joe Lewis, Jonathan Cross, Chris Lee, Barbara Bach, Donald Pleasance, Joseph Wiseman, and John Huston.

Bram Stoker's novel JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS, script by Clive Exton will be filmed by EMI in London and Egypt.

LIMELIGHT PRODUCTIONS is an independent British/French film co. which has a dozen projects in the works, each written by major sf authors, like Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke.

LUCKY LUKE II has been released in France; directed by Morris & Goscinny (who did the comic strip).

THE LONE RANGER begins filming Spr. '79.

LADY OSCAR, is based on the Jap comic strip THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES. About a girl brought up as a man during the French revolution. Becomes one of Marie Antoinette's guards.

THE MUPPET MOVIE will be released June 22, 1979. Jim Henson's SESAME STREET characters will appear, as well as the usual Muppet gang. Budget is $8 million. Real people include Bob Hope, Richard Pryor, Orson Welles, Charles Durning, Edgar Bergen (& Charlie McCarthy), Cloris Leachman. Dom DeLuise plays a Hollywood agent; Madeline Kahn plays a barmaid who makes a play for Kermit.

MISTRESS OF THE APES is a jungle film.

METEOR has been postponed. It'll be released Oct. 17, 1979, not June, due to delays in sfx post-production. Directed by Ronald Neame for AIP, it stars Sean Connery, Natalie Wood, Henry Fonda, Trevor Howard.

THE MAGICIAN, based on Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel, stars Alan Arkin, Brenda Vaccaro, and Shelly Winters.

NIGHTWING, about a plague of vampire bats is from Warner Bros. Director: Arthur Hiller, Henry Mancini scores the music. Carlo Rambaldi has created mechanical bats which can turn their heads, snap their jaws. Rambaldi created the alien at the end of CE3K.

THE NINTH CONFIGURATION will be written and directed by William Peter Blatty, from his latest novel.

ODYSEA presents a world in which overpopulation and good shortages have driven people underwater. A war erupts between the submarine civilization (Oceana) and the surface people (Terrestria) in this $10 million film.

THE PHOENIX stars Richard Kiel.

PLANET OF THE DINOSAURS prehistoric pic has opened in Italy. No American distribution has been set.

POSTCARDS FROM PROVIDENCE: A FILM PORTRAIT OF H.P. LOVECRAFT documentary will be narrated by Louis Malle, will feature interviews with Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Colin Wilson, Michael Moorcock, and Isaac Asimov.

THE PHANTOM PIRATE is John (WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS) Dark's next film.

THE PLAGUE DOGS, Richard (WATERSHIP DOWN, SHARDIK) Adams' most recent book will be animated by Martin Rosen, who did WATERSHIP.

PHANTASM will be released March 28, 1979 by Avco Embassy. Horror film by Don Coscarelli, starring Michael Baldwin, Bill Thornbury.

THE PRIMEVALS by David Allen sports some excellent model animation. The Charles Rand production is now filming at a $1 million.

RESURRECTION stars Ellen Burstyn as a woman with an accidental gift for healing, following a car accident. The world starts to take notice; her followers think she's Jesus returned to Earth. Script by Lewis John Carlino, directed by Daniel Petrie. Co starring Sam Shepard, Richard Farnsworth.

ROBIN, a 'historically accurate' version of the Robin Hood story, will b e directed by John (ROCKY) Avildsen.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME, the H.G. Wells remake will be directed by George McCowan with a $3.2 million budget. Stars Jack Palance, Carol Lynley, Barry Morse, John Ireland, Nicholas Campbell.

SPACE FOR HIRE, the William F. Nolan sf comedy, has been optioned by Triton Prod.

SATURN 3, will be produced by Stanley Donen and directed by John Barry. Script by Martin Amis. Cast: Farrah Fawcett-Majors, Kirk Douglas, Harvey Kietel. Production began January 17, 1979.

Jerzy Skolimowski's THE SHOUT is about an inmate of an asylum (Alan Bates) who has the ability to kill with his shout. Co-stars John Hurt and Tim Curry, and sports some fantastic Dolby Stereo effects.

THIRST is an Australian vampire movie.

TIME AFTER TIME, script by Karl Anderson & Steve Hayes, directed by Nicholas Meyer (THE SEVEN PER CENT SOLUTION writer) follows H.G. Wells (Malcolm McDowell) as he pursues Jack the Ripper through time.

VORTEX concerns a Bermuda Triangle like area which is activated by a supernova. The film, directed by John Bud Cardos, will be shot in wide-screen Panavision.

THE WATCHER IN THE WOODS is one of at least two live-action Disneys to be filmed this year in London. Disney's THE FOX AND THE HOUND animated special will be released December 1980. 101 DALMATIONS will be re-released Summer 1979.

THE WATTS MONSTER (formerly DR. BLACK & MR. HYDE) from Dimension Pictures will be released April 11, 1979. Stars Bernie Casey, Rosalind Cash.

JANUARY 17, 1979, ENTRY 6.

Merkle was at Bill-Dale's front door, pounding hard and shouting.

Bill-Dale shuffled over to answer. His eyes were glazed. However, he was smiling. Smiling was a rarity the past few months in Bill-Dale's repetoire.

"Hi, Billy," Merkle said. "Been calling ya all day yesterday, you didn't answer, what have you been up, hey, what's wrong with you?"

"Nothing, Merk. Every---thing's right, in fact, hahahahahahahaha," Bill-Dale said.

"You're stoned out. Billy, who did this to me? Did someone do this to you?"

"I am both perpetrator and victim." Bill-Dale swayed from side to side, walking like his legs were full of straw. Merkle grabbed him as he started to fall.

Merkle laid him down on the living room couch, holding him by the collar and shouting into his face. "WHAT'D YOU TAKE?"

"es---tee."

"Nestea?"

"el-lis--toe."

"LSD? Oh, God, how could you. YOU--After all that shit you said." Merkle got up and paced back and forth.

"Don't say----that."

Later that night Merkle was able to carry on a more sophisticated conversation.

"Billy, can't you see, taking that shit is like sleeping with a whore. It's all paint and eyelash, it ain't heart. Hey, this world ain't got much, but it got some things that are worth staying on the ground for--like having drinks with the guys down at Murphy's, like kids, and puppy dogs. Lots of---DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOIN' TO YOURSELF?" Merkles eyes were wet, no doubt from his own cigarette smoke.

"No, Ted. It's great. I don't need anybody now. I'm alone, but I'm never lonely, I'm never depressed, I'm never frustrated..."

"And you no longer love..."

"I love. I love myself. I love you. I love the trees and the birds. But most of all I love these little yellow pills..."

"You love like a drunk loves." Merkle's voice was low now. "It's all slobber and tears. Try to do something when you are like this, try to have an opinion. Try to get INDIGNANT and fired up like hell, like ya used to. Remember how you told me how sometimes you would have to stop what you were doing, and run to your typewriter, and write down what you were feeling, because there weren't nothing else you could do. Try to do that now, kid. Your passion is GONE. GONE."

"Yeah, but I'm happy. You can't take that away from me."

"No, I guess I can't."

JANUARY 20, 1979, ENTRY 7.

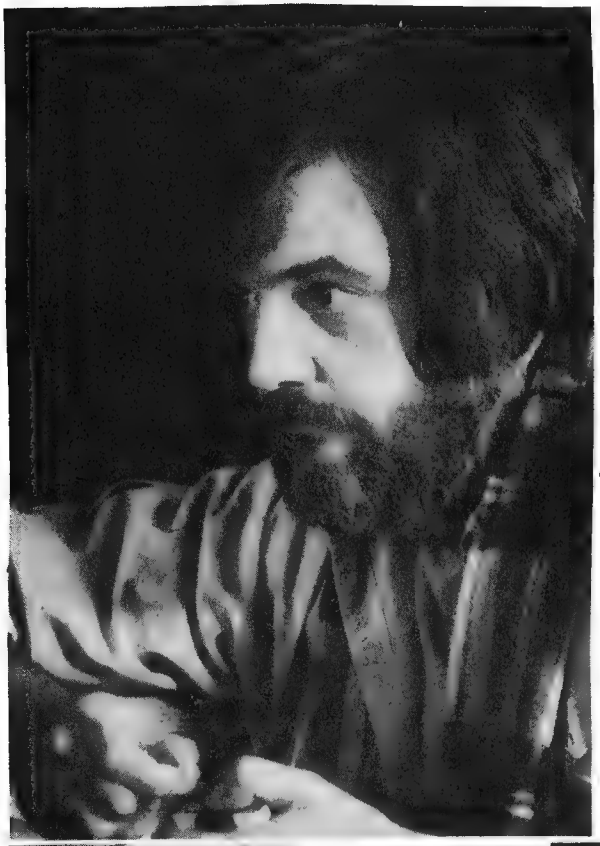
Rupert Peach called again today.

He said he wants to help me out, make what I'm doing available to a larger audience.

I don't want to be successful. There are successful people--politicians, actors, religious leaders, writers--and they, they just want more success. Then there are the consumers, the fans, the people who will never be on the other side--they feel isolated and angry because they aren't PART OF IT ALL.

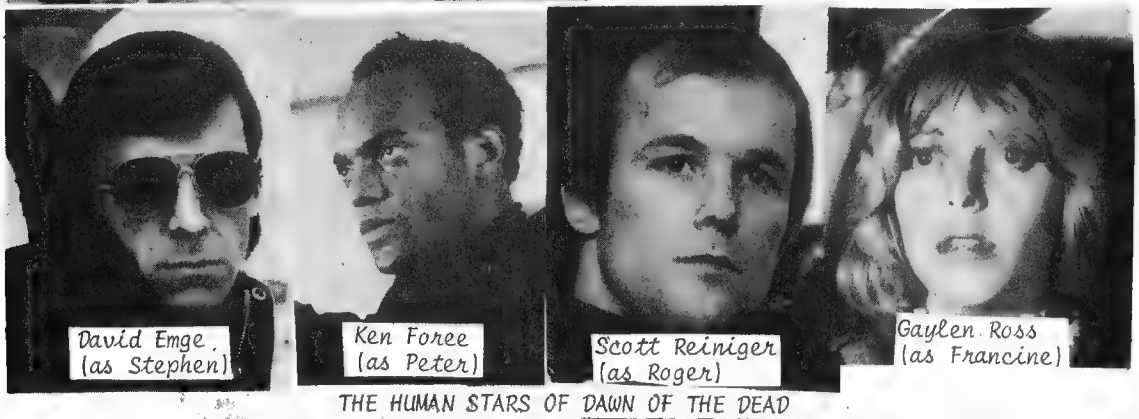
This dichotomy is horrifying. Today's problem's can be solved if matters of living were brought down to a human, personal level. Less pragmatic, technical. War, crime, madness, terrorism, prejudice, they all exist because people allow them to--people are unable to find things which link them--the common body of humanity, call it what you will. Overcrowding and mobility and anonymity encourage a climate of violence. For to do violence to someone, you must have, at one point, stopped wanting to KNOW them. We in America discourage identity, uniqueness.

A Conversation with GEORGE A. ROMERO



Writer/Director of
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD
THE CRAZIES
MARTIN
The Soon-To-Be-Released
DAWN OF THE DEAD

Sequel to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD



THE HUMAN STARS OF DAWN OF THE DEAD

SYNOPSIS: Roger and Peter, two Philly SWAT members escape the city with their friends Francine and Stephen in a traffic helicopter and eventually land on the roof of an enormous shopping mall. They secure the mall from the zombies, and set up quarters in a CD storage area, living off the supplies in the mall. One day a motorcycle gang enters the mall to loot it, letting in the zombies, and creating the scenario between our protagonists, the gang, and the zombies. Stephen and Roger are eventually killed and become zombies; Peter and Francine escape in the helicopter. *WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY George A. Romero; PRODUCED by Rich Rubinstein; DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Mike Gornick; MAKE-UP by Tom Savani; MUSIC (in QUAD) by Dario Argento.*

DAWN OF THE DEAD, George Romero's sequel to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, will be released April 20, as reported in the following article in VARIETY. I conducted this interview with him in New York on December 1, 1978.

"Dawn of the Dead," director George Romero's sequel to his 1968 cult horror pic "Night of the Living Dead," has been picked up for U.S. release by United Film Distribution and will open nationally April 20, with 200 engagements pencilled into 25 cities on that date.

The film, produced and partially financed by Italo producers Claudio Argento and Alfredo Cuomo with local backing by Billy Baxter and Herbert Steinman, will be distributed nationally without a rating seal from the Motion Picture Assn of America.

According to exec producer Richard Rubinstein, whose Laurel Film Group packaged the project, "we're all generally supportive of the rating system but felt that since there is no classification for an adult feature that happens not to have an sexual content, we didn't want the misconception — or the economic sanctions — of an X-rating."

UFD topper Richard Hassanein, whose distribbery is a wholly owned subsidiary of United Artists Theatre Circuit, said "Dawn of the Dead" would be booked and advertised with a tagline warning that due to the violent nature of the pic, patrons under the age of 18 would not be admitted, effectively imposing a self-generated X rating.

New York opening of the pic will be spearheaded by berths at UATC's midtown Rivoli, east side Gemini, and one undetermined house in Greenwich Village. Hassanein said the first wave of 200 engagements will increase to a subrun saturation of up to 300 houses by July, "although we'll see how strong the picture is before committing ourselves to that many prints."

"Dawn of the Dead" first bowed in Italy last September, charging through a successful run under the European title, "Zombie." Pic has been sold through most overseas territories and opens imminently in Spain (via Izaro), in Germany later this month (via Neue Constantin) and in Japan, where Nippon Herald picked it up, in March. English-speaking Canada remains unsold.

BILL-DALE: Were there any unexpected reactions with the test audiences? (Note: at this point, George had shown DAWN to a number of people at special previews. At one such preview, on Dec. 1, in New York, I saw the film, too.)

GEORGE: I think anyone that's a fan of the genre and people that have seen NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD come in very suspicious-- 'Come on, why would you ever want to make a sequel?' I've been very defensive all along, I don't call this a sequel. I call it the second part of a trilogy (DAY OF THE DEAD is the third film's title). It's not an extension of NOTLD. It is in that it deals with the same phenomenon, maybe a few months later. But it's not connected in form in any way. People who are into NOTLD are able to get into this film, because it's not imitative. It takes the phenomenon to the point where it has the world in real choas, where the zombies and the humans are at about equal balance. It's got a completely different tone. It's a lot of fun. People who are into the horror genre get off on it, because it's kind of an homage to the whole horror genre. The people who can't get through it are the ones who have a super objection to the violent nature of the film. The violence --I don't think there's anything in the film we haven't seen before--but it's in such abundance, that it becomes a texture that runs through the whole film, and in that sense it's a battering experience. It's almost like a warzone experience.

There is an underbed of violence in this country and around the world that you can't deny. What I was trying to do with the film was see if you could get past that, and enjoy what is basically an action/adventure comedy, almost. Not comedy in the ha ha sense. It is a comedy in the traditional dramatic sense, even though this violence is happening every few minutes.

You forget about the bum, you forget about the fact you might get mugged in the street and you live with that, you live in spite of it, and around it.

Some of the most surprising reactions have been from people that I thought would be so revulsed by the violence, and yet come back and say, Jesus, MARTIN was harder for me to take, it's so plastic I can get off on it. And it works much better with a big audience, the film needs that audience participation. People do wind up hooting and hollering and cheering and booing, and that's what it's all about. I'm really happy to see that.

Then there is the opposite pole. There is a sensitivity and consciousness today about violence, particularly in cinema and on tv that causes some people to view violence as a form of pollution. Obviously I think that's crock. The film will create a lot of controversy in that way. Among the distributors that we are talking to, some of them want to push that all the way, and go for the controversy almost as an advertising gimmick, others are trying to soften it and keep out of it. I was at an adult education class at Hunter College and I'd say half the people at the class thought I was a pornographer--some people view violence in cinema as sex--and in some sense it is. But what's pornographic. Define it. Those attitudes are irritating to me. I think the plasticized violence, like when John Wayne rides in and shoots down a hundred Indians, it's harmless. These changing trends are unfair. When you figure that two years ago this wouldn't have had a problem with the rating, or the public sensitivity.

BILL-DALE: Are there any dangers of it getting an X? (Note: See the news in article which heads off this interview--a self-generated X was imposed)

GEORGE: Depends whether you consider that a danger or what. My argument is this. Most the public, middle America, still considers an "X" as meaning sex. They don't understand that there have been films that have been "X"-ed for violence. There has not been a film that has gone into release with an X for violence. That's the problem.

When you have an X, you have distinct distribution problems. Newspapers won't run ads, theaters won't place the picture, you can't advertise on tv. That makes it a restriction of trade.

Jaws had a PG, and it was very bloody. And traumatizing. You have to talk about what's traumatizing. But I think children are very resilient--they've been reading for years. Fairy tales. The Bible.

BILL-DALE: A number of tv critics have complained that the presentation of unrealistic violence creates a greater danger because people take it for granted. How do you feel about DAWN OF THE DEAD? How will people react to the violence?

GEORGE: It is in a fantasy context. And the violence becomes part of the story. The film is about the violent underbed in America during any kind of revolution, which is what the film discusses. As far as plasticizing violence, I believe, based on things I've read about it, that it probably has no effect. Because it's removed--it's a special effect, and you watch it like you would watch L.A. being destroyed in an earthquake. You have to be more careful with realistic violence. TAXI DRIVER-type violence, because there you have to carry it through. I think a film like that, if you saw him walk over to somebody and put a gun up to his head, and cut to him and didn't show the shot, that's when you're titilating without releasing. That could be a problem.

BILL-DALE: This whole idea of tremendous violence, and setting it in a shopping mall. Isn't there irony in that? Are you attempting some kind of allegory about plasticized consumerism?

GEORGE: Oh, sure.

BILL-DALE: Do you think a lot of people will pick that up?

GEORGE: I think a lot of people will. It becomes very obvious. The film is a morality play about the false security of this consumer-oriented goal we've set for ourselves. It doesn't do anything for the people in the film. They've got it, they're locked. They've got everything they want, but it is still not enough to save them societally or personally. But this allegory is there just as an out-trapping of the outgoing society. If you deal with my zombie films as a trilogy,which is the way I look at them, it's a parable about revolution. With the first one being the beginning of the phenomenon where the new society rears its head, but the operative society is still in control in the end of the film. This film is in the middle, fighting for balance. The third one, is where the revolutionary society is dominant and has in essence won. But they are under the control of small elitist groups.

BILL-DALE: You talk about it using the word 'operative' and 'revolutionary' society. What is the nature of the revolution?

GEORGE: It doesn't matter to me at all. A lot of people have tried to read into that. The two things I'm concerned about is you have a revolutionary society; it's values are entirely different from the operative society. The outgoing's society's values seem not to be supporting it anymore because of various kinds of corruption. Those are the only two aspects of the discussion. The operative society's lack of communication and cooperation make it unable to deal with the incoming society, which is depicted in DAWN OF THE DEAD. The shopping mall becomes a symbol of what we've hung our hat on. It's not working because we are not cooperating with each other. When the revolution is finally won, and the revolutionary society becomes the dominant, operative society-- we find that there are little groups of the living who are kind of the command centers, kindgdoms that are actually controlling the zombies. You then see the zombies begin to fall into that pattern. That's what it's all about. Within it, the only subplots I'm dealing with are the disintegration of families, which are just symbolically dealt with. Other than that, it doesn't express a specific political ideology.

BILL-DALE: Did you always have this concept in mind when you did NOTLD, which seems to touch on the disintegration of families. Did you always plan on extending it like this?

GEORGE: I always thought of it as much longer. I wrote it as a story which was inspired by Richard Matheson's I AM LEGEND. I wrote the story as a much more pointed kind of allegory than the thing we're talking about now. It went all the way. You suddenly realize they were being controlled, that basic behavior doesn't change. The things that are pointed to in DAWN are the disintegration of social standards--the fact that people are not willing to take the corpses of their loved ones out and burn them, or chop off their head. DAWN begins with a special forces raid on a low income housing project, where people are just refusing to give up the corpses of their loved ones. They have them down in the basement.

We understand that there's choas. People are going crazy. People are getting sucked up in the whole idea of going out and hunting zombies. There's a sequence where they are in a helicopter and they are flying over the hills and there's a bunch of redneck National Guardsmen on a zombie hunt, drinking beer, singing. The four people who we deal with try to land a couple of places to get fuel, trying to make it to Canada. They don't know where they're going. They land on the roof of a shopping mall, and they see a storage area and hole up there. Then they start to get...tempted, make a run, and they pull off this incredible kind of militaristic maneuver to "win" the mall and collect some clothes, furniture and stereos from the mall.

BILL-DALE: You said that NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD was a 40's film made in the 60's and DAWN was a 60's film made in the 70's...

GEORGE: The whole concept grew out of that anger, that activism. This film's very different in tone--super simplified, very strident, like the PROFESSIONALS. I'm not that angry anymore. I didn't want to make a sullen kind of film. I like the space between the two films.I hope the third one can be that way, too. The problem is because of the success of ZOMBIE (*The title DAWN was released under in Italy--Bill-Dale*) is that they want me to do it next week. It's really been difficult for me to convince people to wait awhile. I'm still in the same time and place, and if I were to start next week and shoot another one, it would just be the same film extended. For me to try to force it into something else and not know what I was doing, I might fuck it up.

BILL-DALE: Looking at the two films from a technical standpoint, what techniques did you use in directing and editing the two films?

GEORGE: Again, we had a budget this time. We were able to do it the way we wanted to. Mike and I, when we first started to approach it, discussed films like THE PROFESSIONALS. The shopping center lends itself to that--big, sprawling color. And the nature of the characters--two of the guys are SWAT Team officers--it's a romanticized kind of style. It's really Sixties Hollywood, visually, and the pacing, the way it was scored, is very Sixtyish. Mike did a great job, and it was difficult, there's no way to light that mall. We only had it at night, the stores close up at ten, the clean up crews didn't get out until 11:30. Then we had to start lighting. We weren't allowed to leave a cable strung from the day before. We had to shoot low light. Even though it hits you in the gut, it's romanticized. I see it as a lot of fun. The bikers in the end--there's an organized army of vans and motorcycles, they break in, which lets the zombies back in--those guys were real bikers, and even in selecting the shots on those guys, it was a matter of not making them look too nitty gritty. Some of the guys were so extreme with their bikes and the way they were dressed that they looked like the product of a Hollywood designer. And those are the the guys the photographic emphasis is on.

BILL-DALE: You mentioned the budget, and that NOTLD was made in black and white--was that more out of budget than choice?

GEORGE: What we did on NIGHT was all on energy, staying up during the night. You can't do exactly what you want to do. But if you're flexible, you make up for it. You don't try to do certain things you know you can't pull off. I believe you can work within any budgetary range. The decision about going black and white was budgetary initially. We were trying to promote three other scripts for the two years prior to 1967 with no success. I had this story I had written. I broke off the front end of it, and ten of us got together and put in $600 each, so we had six grand. We bought a case of film, and it had to be black and white. We did shoot in 35mm. There has been a lot of stuff written that said we shot in 16mm. As soon as we started to show rushes, a couple of Pittsburgh investors came in, and we started to raise some money. And at that point, the question came up about switching to color, because we only had four days in the can. I decided I liked the way it looked in black and white...for that esthetic.

DAWN OF THE DEAD has to be in color--the attitude of the film, because of the shopping center, because of what it's all about. Even with Tom Savani, who did an incredible job with the effects, I tried to plasticize it--it's EC COMICS not TAXI DRIVER. The blood is red, clearly plastic.

THE DEERHUNTER--they are running very strange ads. They got an R, but then they put their own disclaimers on it, no one under 18. I hear that it's really brutal, and that it's very realistic. What makes that more acceptable? Just because of it's topic. That's not valid.

This film, in my mind, is just as serious a film, except I'd rather not deal directly with the war in Vietnam, I'd rather talk about it while dealing with zombies. I don't see the difference. They feel my film is very flippant--it's a horror thing, and that makes it less valid. That's the most irritating thing in my mind about the way people accept my work. People in the genre accept it, and that's a gas.

BILL-DALE: You could say the same thing about Hawkes and Ford, who worked within genres. Only much later did people have the facility to overlook the genre aspects and their own prejudices.

GEORGE: It takes a long time for people to get by that. What those people don't realize, man, is that it's very risky to make a film like this. It's either going to make a lot of money or NOTHING. There's no chance of it being in the middle. These people at Hunter were saying, c'mon, you did this to make money. They think you are automatically making money because they feel it's so exploitative. You're warping the children just to make some bread. It's not true--it's very dangerous, particularly as an independent, particularly to spend a million and a half on an independent film.

BILL-DALE: Perhaps you could recount the NOTLD legal problems. The lawsuits with Walter Reade, the problems with distribution-what was the story with that?

GEORGE: It was my first film. For all of us it was. We signed a worldwide contract with Walter Reade. Again, there are so many rumors about it, I've seen it written where we haven't got a penny, that we sold it outright for fifty grand. We had a straight distribution deal, not very favorable, but as independents it was not a bad deal--most people don't get a deal at all. Walter Reade put it out there and it made a lot of money. The least that any of the investors got was like 5 or 6 to 1. The problem has always been how much.

The contract also said they would release it only as the "A" picture. It made most of its money, contrary to what people think, in its first year. Drive ins and that. They were selling it out flat, not knowing it would later become a cult film. They didn't make as much money as they could have, but they made a LOT. Now it's in excess of $10 million. The problem with IMAGE TEN, the company that was formed to produce that picture and that picture only, is the complaint of how much money it really did make, and that they started to play it off on the bottom half of double bills, which contractually they weren't allowed to do. I can't complain too much because the fact they put it out under SLAVES, the main line critics went to see SLAVES saw it and started to defend it. It has an ancillary benefit.

BILL-DALE: Do you foresee any repeat of the READER'S DIGEST sort of thing?

GEORGE: I think the time is ripe. In a certain sense, I'm taking a little bit of delight. When NOTLD came out, it probably went further than any other horror film had done. It broke new ground. Now that we have gone through 'anything goes' time and gone back to the feeling that violence is pollution, it's almost a similar stage. However, I would be the first one to put a flag on this film and say keep the kids away from it. I'm not trying to be outrageous in that way--force my kids to watch this film and get traumatized. But I shouldn't be unable to show my film to those who want to see it.

BILL-DALE: What happened to two of your earlier films, THE AFFAIR and JACK'S WIFE?

GEORGE: THE AFFAIR was originally called THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA, and it was the film I made right after NOTLD, with some of the same people. I can say unequivocally that we were not ready and it shouldn't have been made. It was a good script, but we weren't properly financed. Right after NOTLD came out, a group came to us in Pittsburgh and said, make another movie. When something like NOTLD goes out, you say to yourself, this is an easy business. You can make something for $100,000 and get $500,000 back. Let's make 20 of these and we'll be rich. We were a commercial production company in Pittsburgh, this was our first time out of the gate, and we said terrific. We went into VANILLA with about $125,000. We shot it in 16mm color. I stepped out of the genre because I was going through a period of paranoia, you know, I don't want to be Blood Director. I'm gonna make me a serious film, man. I just looked at it recently, and it's not a bad little film. It's a naive romantic comedy, boy-girl-girl triangle, that's all. Campast Films picked it up. They were just coming off a film called CRY UNCLE, which had made them a lot of money. They were going through a period of paranoia not wanting to be a porno outfit.

BILL-DALE: Where did that actually get distributed? Where is it now?

GEORGE: It was very dated.

BILL-DALE: What about JACK'S WIFE?

GEORGE: JACK'S WIFE is a film I would like to make someday. It's a script that I wrote that I really like a lot.

BILL-DALE: I have heard a lot of different descriptions of it. People seem to call it either an occult thriller or read into it feminist overtones.

GEORGE: It is a film about a woman, and it was 1969, the beginning of feminine consciousness raising. It is an observation I was making about a comfortable suburban housewife. It peripherally deals with the occult. It's about that typical suburban person, her husband pays no attention to her, the kids are grown up, about that trap. She and the rest of the ladies she hangs out with, aside from going to bridge clubs and going out and painting the ghetto, get involved with a local woman who claims to be a witch, starts going to classes, tarot readings. She's using it just as a way to open up her life. She is able to believe that she's conjuring the things that are happening. She buys the clothes. Then she starts scaring herself, because the whole thing isn't sitting right.

BILL-DALE: What happened to that?

GEORGE: Again we were undercapitalized. We didn't have a distributor involved. It's such a serious drama, it was hard to distribute it. What, there's no action, and I wasn't able to get it released. With both of these films, when I was able to get in and show them, because of NOTLD, since it wasn't a horror genre repeat, everybody said forget it. They both went into distribution. JACK'S WIFE was picked up by Jack Harris and he called it HUNGRY WIVES--it still plays around, but it's really been ripped apart. It's a 2 hour 10 minute picture and he's playing an 85 minute version of it.

Then... THE CRAZIES, the most successful of the three right after DEAD. Cambast Films co-produced THE CRAZIES. It was a little better capitalized. It was still peanuts, a $300,000 project, but I consider it a really successful film. It just had bad handling; they put a lot of money into New York City, they spent $150,000. They didn't promote NOTLD, they didn't use tv. In essence what happened is they blew their wad, and the distributor winds up shelving it. We since have the rights to film back, we've been able to sell tv (*NOTE: In some areas, it plays under the title of CODE NAME: TRIXIE. However, the Channel 9 New York February 12, 1979 showing ran it under THE CRAZIES*) and European rights.

BILL-DALE: How would you describe the film? There's a scientific sort of ANDROMEDA STRAIN thriller edge to it.

GEORGE: Not really. It doesn't really deal with that. That's what's happening. But it's not scientific, no one knows what's going on. It's a bio weapons film. It deals more with the effect of the situation, rather than the situation itself. It deals with the three days in a little town, the military is sent in. They don't even know why they're there. They send the scientist who developed the strain in, then they can't let him back out. There are a lot of errors made, no communication. Their commanders know a little more, but there's four cats at the Pentagon who know what's going on. They wind up having to put a nuclear bomb over the air in the town and the operative effect is that the people in the town decide they are just not going to get shoved around by soldiers. They're all armed and it turns into a war zone. It's a frantic chaotic kind of experience, it's pounding. We thought that the film was gonna be a big smash. It just wasn't handled carefully. It should have gone out and played drive-ins. It made me realize, among other things, that I had to develop some kind of corporate base, that you just didn't go make the movie for so much and get so much back. That there was a whole business, whole other parameters. We were still operating purely out of Pittsburgh. That's when I set up my partnership with Rich Rubenstein. For the first few years, we didn't produce theatrical. We did imports of European theatrical films, through which we developed good relations with distributors and got to

know people in the business. We also have a publishing division (*St. Martin's Press.* --BD) and we published about 30 books. We also produced, through the shop in Pittsburgh, about 30 shows for tv, including 17 hour-long sports biographies for ABC, O.J. Simpson, Kareem Jabaar, Mario Andretti, Reggie Jackson. Then we started to put together the deal for DAWN OF THE DEAD. I had the idea for MARTIN, which I really loved, and again some money fell out of the trees. MARTIN was not an expensive film. It was $150,000, 16mm color. I wanted something as a re-entry, before just coming out with DAWN OF THE DEAD. We made MARTIN while we were negotiating the deal for DAWN. It did well, it won a couple of festivals. It got me back to talk to people again. MARTIN is not the kind of film that can go out and be a big exploitation film. Coming out with it just before DAWN OF THE DEAD, it's great because MARTIN is a much more serious film, a much more dramatic film. I can say, look I can do something else besides this action pizzazzo kind of thing.

BILL-DALE: With MARTIN, you play around with the vampire concept. The film seems to be a debate over "Is this superstition, is this reality?"

GEORGE: I don't care if MARTIN is a vampire in the supernatural sense, or if he's a nut--that's not what the film is about. I prefer that's it's ambiguous. It was inspired by THE NIGHT STALKER and YORGA and all that. With that, people were saying, wow, finally a contemporary vampire. All it did was take the same character and the same problem and put on it the outtrappings of contemporary society. My first ideas were, if there were a vampire today, he's probably gonna have to get new identification every 20 years; he probably wouldn't be affluent. He'd probably be down in the streets, dealing shit. It's almost a whole other idea, 'cause I would still like to do that. I saw him on the street and having all kinds of hard times. From there I got into the concept about how we create our own monsters, and how it's so closely related to one-on-one relationships as they are developing today, with the "ME" consciousness. The concept of us creating monsters just to expurgate ourselves. That happens in one-on-one relationships, whether they are love relationships, parent-child relationships. Beyond that, I just started to write on him as a character. Affected by his insane family beliefs and within. But he behaves as a vampire, and someone should seriously deal with the problem. Christina is the only one that comes close with wanting to deal with it, but she's more concerned with 'Fuck, Arthur's not here!--more concerned with her own trip.

BILL-DALE: Do you have a psychological explanation for Martin?

GEORGE: Yes, I did research on that, and I talked to a number of psychologists. If someone were faced with that extreme kind of behavior. There are cases of different kinds or parasitic enemias, where people eat raw hamburger and want to drink blood. Of course, there's the sexual repression in a character like Martin. While it ties to the traditional sexual themes that run through the Gothic vampire story, it becomes part of the psychosis.

BILL-DALE: In the Hammer films, the sexuality is completely different. Almost obligatory, never really brought to the front...

GEORGE: Now it's happening more, with the Anne Rice thing, and some of the newer vampire things. They're starting to do more with it. It hasn't been dealt with really effectively anywhere, except in Stoker. It's more in Stoker than anywhere else. There's a photo essay in the new Playboy with some really sexy vampire photographs. Those photographs to me are quite good, if you want to deal with that Gothic vampire format. But with MARTIN, it fits even if he is just a nut, because sex would be one area he would be really repressed, and that's a way of getting it off. Be is really sympathetic. My biggest objection to the Lee things is that he was evil, never really sympathetic.

BILL-DALE: Not just the evil, but there was a certain coldness and flatness about him that made it hard for you to identify...

GEORGE: That's right. Getting back...The success of MARTIN and DAWN has put us in the position now where we have offers for new productions. I have four properties that I like a lot. One is the third DEAD picture, which I'm trying to delay as much as possible. I have a motorcycle thing, a western, and one that I love, a 50's UFO thing. I'm also thinking about the concept of Time Travel in a time machine story--it will be a pretty logical thing. The idea of time vs. space. How can you step in a time machine in Central Park and end up in Central Park?

BILL-DALE: Have you written these yourself?

GEORGE: I wrote the motorcycle and the western thing, and I'm playing around with the time machine concept. I will write the third DEAD, too, but right now I only have sketches. The guy that wrote the UFO thing is the guy who wrote THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA. His name is Rudy Ritchie--so far he's the only other writer that I've worked with.

Only in the last year have we had enough money to approach literary agents to buy properties. Most of the stuff that's good, I don't care if you read a paperback the first day on the stands and fall in love with it, you call up, and they say, the rights have been sold 6 months ago. One other time we bid on a property. We bid on BLACK SUNDAY--the only reason for that was some of the people who are involved with us are managers of the Pittsburgh Stealers. I saw an ad for BLACK SUNDAY when I was at the airport on my way to the Super Bowl. We made a bid on the book. We bid higher than Paramount did, but didn't get it, 'cause we weren't Paramount.

Now we have a couple of other properties we are negotiating. Under the right circumstances I would do it. I don't reject the studios. I reject the idea of rushing into a studio situation without the proper kind of clout. I don't reject the system--I'd love to be able to work with those advantages. Technical advantages, and money, but I wouldn't want to do it unless I could control what I was doing.

I am forever reading a book and saying, wow, I'd love to do that. Like SALEM'S LOT. I've talked to Stephen about it and he'd be very agreeable if we could do it. We talked for awhile with Warner Brothers, but now it's gonna be made into a tv-movie.

BILL-DALE: Still, it must be a good feeling to write and direct your own films and have such a close relationship with the producers and distributors. Do you find yourself wanting to do a few more independent films?

GEORGE: Yes, absolutely. A lot of directors, Coppola, while he operates with studio support operates as an independent. That's my ideal future. Stay independent, but if you have ideas that need a lot of money you have to work with the studios. You can't finannce privately anything with serious money. But I agree with you. I want to continue to work with controls on what I do. I like to write them, but I consider my writing, particularly in terms of dialogue--I consider it my weakest link. I think I can create situations. Not dialogue--except in certain genres, like the horror genre, where it doesn't matter.

BILL-DALE: A thread that runs through a lot of your films, the DEAD films and THE CRAZIES. You seem to write about characters that have to deal with social order and social chaos. MARTIN, with it's psychological theme, is a departure, however...

GEORGE: Yes. It deals with people. The undebed in the zombie films is a kind of handshake with the audience, there's nothing new about it. It's very Sixties--we've been through the days in the coffee shops, having a smoke, this is the way we perceive it--right on, whatever. On the surface, you can forget it. If someone said go and make a movie, I don't know if I'd stay with that form. If someone says make me an action film, I don't want to do JUST that, unless I was going to do something like HALLOWEEN, which I consider straight-ahead, clean, no explanations, just zap. It's great--I love HALLOWEEN.

BILL-DALE: Do you find yourself thinking "Sixties" or "Seventies"?

GEORGE: When I think in a genre, I try to put an underbed on it. The Western has strong socio-political overtones. When I think in terms of an idea, like MARTIN, the idea becomes central. I love the outrageous genres--because those are the movies I grew up on, I'd love to make a war movie. I'd love to make them all, man. One of each. I thought that at one time, that would be my goal. I try to put something underneath it, though. Sure--that's Sixties. But that's just me, as a person.

BILL-DALE: About your influences--You mentioned studying design at Carnegie-Mellon. You mentioned Spanish painters as an influence. Also, your films have a certain economy. Did commercials prepare you for that?

GEORGE: Commercials do give you economy of mind. And documentaries. The aesthetic is drawn more from that. I don't like allusions to things. I would rather put them right up front--and document them.

Stylistically, I don't see my work as being parallel to Hitchcock, as some people nave mentioned, as much as Welles, or some of the early B-things--Hawkes, Hawke's THE THING--that did it for me.

It's a parasitic medium.

You never get enough practice. Particularly when I was in school. None of the schools have hardware. You sat and talked theory, watched a lot of films, but you never got to do anything. One of the biggest drawbacks is you catch yourself being imitative. You get paranoid about that, and try to force yourself in other directions. I've never consciously made a shot that was imitative--but as you're sitting on the set, figuring out where to put the camera and the lighting, you want to.

In terms of painters, Goya is the cat I liked a lot. I've often wished he could do a film. It'd have to be animated. I'd just love that.

The only place I feel I've developed my own technique, is the area I've done the most of--editing. I've been cutting my stuff and other people's stuff for 20 years. I think my cutting style is developing it's own kind of personality. I use cuts to create suspense, rather than long camera moves. I use a rhythmic kind of cut; I try to pace the cuts to the pace of the action. If it's frantic, I'll be frantic. Sometimes I'll be contrapuntal. I'll take a normal conversation and fuck around with it. Although there are parts in DAWN that are visually jarring, I see now, I'm proud that in 30 cuts (which someone else would have pulled off in one shot) it is still quite fluid. You can manipulate your audience more that way than with a shot.

There's an attitude about a long shot that puts a very subjective overtone on something. And for people involved in the medium, you start thinking about it technically rather than experiencing it. That cubist kind of bang bang bang fives you just as much about the surrounding, and you are much more focused in on what you want people to focus in on— Which you can't do if you are doing a dolly shot. You see a lot of things you are not meant to see. I would rather control the people with individual shots.

BILL-DALE: What about music? Are you feeling confortable in integrating it into the film?

Music to me is a very personal part of the film. I don't know what I could relate it to in drawing or painting, but it's almost like the kind of paper you use. If I'm going to do a charcoal drawing, it's different if I do it on brown paper than if I do it on white paper. Whether as recall, or as an emotional trigger. Or trying to make people think of what they have seen in another kind of film--scoring calls up other films we have seen. It sets a mood based on all the film information in your head.

I tend to use a lot of scoring. People tend to think I use too much. I think it's essential. When you use a lot of music, the lack of music becomes an element. When you use too much music, you can use the non-music effectively. I like to find a balance.

Dario (Argento) has more music in his version (in Italy) than in mine. But he has a particular pounding way of using his music. Constantly the same theme over and over. That has an effect, some of which I've liked. So I mixed it in with some library stuff and some Muzak, which is an important part of the film.

BILL-DALE: If there is one thing I really loved, it has to be some of those scenes in NOTLD, like with the sheriff, those ad-libbed things...

GEORGE: A lot of the traditional, tongue-in-cheek, rip-off dialogue from NOTLD is very different from the ad-libbed stuff. And I went through a lot of problems with that, because it wasn't as structured. I had to leave it in, because it was so great. It shouldn't work, because the rest of the dialogue is so staged, especially the Helen and Harry Cooper scenes. At first the documentary stuff with the police and the sheriff wasn't sitting right. Somehow because the rest of the film being sullen and moody, it worked. There was one scene in DAWN OF THE DEAD, an ad-libbed scene that I ended up using because it worked better than the staged stuff.

There's a point where one of the human characters dies. And it's probably the heaviest moment in the movie, in terms of what is played for tragedy. The first of the four dies. Having been bitten, he is coming back. He and his buddy are sitting in a room where they have their place fixed up. Roger is lying there with a blanket over him, and Peter is there with a pistol ready to pick him off, and Roger says, "Don't do it until you're sure I'm coming back"

I had the other two characters out,the woman unpacking dishes and stuff. There is this scene with Richard Frantz and Howard Smith, who writes the SCENES column for the Voice, playing this choatic tv interview scene. That plays so well against this heavy scene, it is one of my favorite moments in all of my movies.

One of the problems of working within the system is you don't have these moments, you can't do that. The time=money has become such a dictum, that you've got...12 days. You can't deviate at all. You want to change the color of the drapes, you can't do that. That is why all those films have the same kind of look--they're all looking like tv. My biggest self-indulgence is to try to leave as much time as possible, and to be as flexible as possible, because I cut my own stuff.

BILL-DALE: On the eve of DAWN OF THE DEAD's release, what worries do you have about the film?

GEORGE: I think I'm afraid that it will take more heat than NOTLD took, because of this hypersensitivity. That wouldn't be too disturbing as long as the film is successful. I'm concerned that that kind of polarization, that kind of reactionary attitude almost CAUSES the problem. As long as the controversy rages, you keep polarizing things. I'd hate to get sued by someone who says I caused eight people to die. I don't know how to deal with that.

BILL-DALE: Like that Linda Blair thing on tv, BORN INNOCENT...

GEORGE: That was one of the better tv things I've seen. It wasn't great, but next to the CRAP that's on television. It was quite serious-minded, very well made. For it to take all that heat is really a shame. If that indeed caused the rape...who knows... you can't even get a straight story, whether or not the girls saw the thing. To be put in that kind of position--this country thrives on controversy. It's economically more viable to keep a controversy going whether or not cigarettes are harmful, it's better to keep it going for TEN YEARS than focusing on it for 6 months and FINDING OUT. It's outrageous. Why can't we get answers? Why doesn't somebody know whether we are running out of gas? Those are the things that are crazy to me, and that's what my films are about.

BILL-DALE: It seems that chaos is the most healthy state for capitalism, controlled, fabricated chaos, because on that level, any hype can be the truth, depending on what combination of news sources you look at. It's frightening to send something out with a very clear idea of what you want, and then have it come back to you...

GEORGE: It's scary. I don't think something like A CLOCKWORK ORANGE or DAWN OF THE DEAD is going to make anyone go out and behave in anyway at all. I think, in fact, it's a very healthy experience, coming out of that theatre--I don't think anyone is going to go hurt someone. Everyone is going to be in a good mood, good cheer, having a ball. *(Note: I saw the Dec. 1 preview shortly after this interview in a packed house at the 86th Street Loew's Theatre. Aside from a number of people who walked out early in the film, the audience which came out afterwards was joking and talking and very, very happy, like we had all gone through World War II together (but we all came out alive, natch) I can't see how this film could be disturbing to anyone --Bill-Dale)* The atmosphere in a receptive audience after the film plays is great. It's not desensitizing. If something is going to cause something to happen, I'd say more in the violence of something like TAXI DRIVER, or DEATH WISH, which aggrandizes that act of vengeance. Especially with the angry mood we have today. If people will destroy Brooklyn when the lights go out, they're read to do anything. I think its wrong to excite without releasing.

The only disturbing thing about the audience's reaction has nothing to do with the violence, but the consumer and economic orientation. There have been a number of situations where we have had inner-city people come to the film and they get off on HAVING...THAT...MALL. Almost like the black out experience. I hate to think that would incite someone to say "Let's go down to the mall tonight and clean it out", but that is like, tv. Tv reality.

BILL-DALE: There seems to be a danger of people accepting the medium, especially tv, as reality. Do you think people will be able to look at the film and say, this is film, and this is my life. A lot of people today are complaining that television at this point has become reality, that it creates culture. (Travolta, Farrah, etc.) It's not a contest anymore between individual reality and interpersonal reality, but television and reality. That frightening crossover...

GEORGE: Yes, we live with those people.

But I think that's only true of television. I don't think the same is true of films.

BECAUSE...There is an act of getting up and going to the theatre. You are automatically removing yourself from your life. With THE JEFFERSONS coming into your living room every week, they literally become part of your family. I do think television has more of a responsibility there. Not that it should be censored in any way, but the responsibility to present role examples, I don't think anyone is doing that.

They're presenting an outrageous, unreal world. All television does, with the intrusion of all those commercials, is make you feel it's all around you, and you don't have it, man. You want the car, you want this, you want that...and THAT is REALLY scary.

What I hope for all electronic media. I really have a lot of hope for the disc, because that's the only way...with theatre movies, you can't play to a select audience anymore, because a select audience, won't make you money, the way the system is set up.

A disc is analagous to the recording industry. You can press Beethoven while you're pressing the Bee Gees. Anyone who wants to buy it, can buy it--with the same economic range. It doesn't break anybody's back. You're gonna be able to sell to a select audience, and you're also going to see people selecting what they want to see--which will clean up the act. You're not going to have three cats forcing this certain kind of programming down your throat. I think broadcast television will be reduced within 10 years just to live event stuff, sports, news, and the passage of information. I think that will be really good. I don't think the theater experience will ever be totally gone--it's something people want, that communal feeling.

books

John Russo has written a sequel to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. John Russo was co-scripter of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD with George Romero.

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD takes place 10 years after NIGHT, in 1978. Most people have forgotten about the tragedy that had happened before. But the Dead do rise again. Once again it takes place in the country, but not just in one farmhouse but all the country (fields, gas stations, woods, mansions, a few houses). We follow the lives of a handful of people as they try to survive the massacre.

Today the ghouls play a small part in the horror. The living cause most of the tragedy. From looters (shades of the NY blackout) to trigger-happy farmers protecting their family.

The prologue is very powerful, with John Russo giving his opinions of death and fear of death. Pretty heavy stuff for basically an "exploitation" novel.

Whether this script was written as the intended sequel to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, none of which George Romero used, or just to capitalize on the release of DAWN, it's hard to say.

George Romero, as such, does not recognize the plotline of RETURN as having anything to do with DAWN OF THE DEAD.

The hardcover book of DAWN OF THE DEAD was released November 20, 1978, by George Romero's ST. MARTIN'S PRESS.

A 3,200 word excerpt from the novel (which George Romero wrote) appeared in the October 1978 issue of HEAVY METAL, by the way.

MW Communications in Pittsburgh is planning to publish a DAWN OF THE DEAD POSTER BOOK. More details and ordering information as they become available.

T-Shirts

DAWN OF THE DEAD t-shirts are available directly from George's company office in New York.

I have one myself, and it's really nice. On the front is a zombie's head and the words "DAWN OF THE DEAD". On the reverse is a quote by George, which Peter says in the movie, "When there's no more room in hell, the dead shall walk the earth." The lettering is white, the t-shirt is black.

It costs $6.00 plus $.60 postage and is available from The Laurel Group, Inc, 150 East 58th Street, New York, NY 10022. Please specify S, M, L, or XL--print your name and address clearly and allow a few weeks for delivery.

Recommended, folks.

Tom Savini

Next issue: An interview with Tom Savini, and exclusive behind-the-scenes photos from Tom's workshop.

Tom Savini is the extremely talented man who did the effects for MARTIN and DAWN OF THE DEAD. If DAWN OF THE DEAD's make-up and effects doesn't bring him into the front rank of make-up artists, there is no God. I have never seen an audience applaud make-up special effects, but at the Dec. 1 preview of DAWN OF THE DEAD they did. With good reason--the effects are stunning, unlike anything anyone has done before in sheer imagination and skill.

Superman

Because of the uneven texture of the film, I came out with a lot of very conflicting emotions, so it really wasn't a success for me in the real sense. I did leave the theatre feeling "up" and positive, but with too many nagging doubts to fully appreciate it.

The credits were too imitative of STAR WARS, overblown, and pompous. The Krypton sequence had all the emotion of a "good" episode of SPACE: 1999, with as complicated effects, and purile visualization of The Phantom Zone (and the editing was so tight on this sequence no one explains what the hell the Phantom Zone is)

From here, the pace gradually improves until the Metropolis sequence, where the energy stays consistently high. Gene Hackman as Luthor is inspired, his plot inane, and his comic henchmen a waste of film. But the confrontation scene between Superman and Luthor is a definitive high point of the film.

But for me, stunts, effects, and flying scenes aside, the film works only when Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder are on the sceen, seperate or together, but especially when they are together. I found the entire convoluted film to really be nothing more than a love story between Superman and Lois Lane, which is fine with me, because its so well done.

There is a chemical magic about those sequences. Even Reeve's Clark Kent, who looked so hokey in the stills, manages to work during the film. Margot Kidder's Lois Lane is so right, taking the edge off the eternal bitch by flashing her own insecurities and fallibilities.

All things considered, the film is a disappointment. The people involved had to be the greatest incompetents who have ever been involved in making a movie. Besides the flying, and one dip in molten earth, all the other stunts and effects are just average. Not worth the money, time, and energy.

--Steven Alan Bennett

SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE is a pleasant surprise. In spite of all the big name stars, in spite of the millions of dollars spent on it, in spite of years of calculated publicity build-up, the movie is an enjoyable escape into fantasy, which is amazingly true to its comic book roots.

In a kind of acknowledgement, the movie opens on an open ACTION comic book in which the character, Superman, was born many years ago. I was afraid that this was just a gimmick, that the makers of the film would destroy the character, out of malice or ignorance, just as television did to the Batman in the 1960's.

I was prepared to hate the movie, knowing that big money often hurts rather than helps a film; knowing that, as a general rule, the more publicity surrounding a movie the less good it is; knowing that Hollywood generally does not understand the world of comic books; knowing that, usually, when big money is pumped into the field, it can destroy the qualities that make it exciting and fresh.

Yet, just the opposite happened. The opening scenes on Krypton--Superman's home planet--were well done, full of atmosphere, presented as I had often envisioned the world. The film followed the comics so well, it even had Lana Lang do a walk-on part, during Clark Kent's adolescence, and she closely resembled the comic book version.

The movie is fun, but even at its two and one-half hour length, part of its failing is that it tries to do so much in a short time. In my mind, the destruction of Krypton could easily be a movie in itself, as could Superman's growing up period. A substantial part of the movie deals with Krypton, and another part with Clark as a teen-ager; and in the Krypton segment, it goes into more detail than even the comics.

The acting is delightful, especially with Christopher Reeve as Superman, who plays the character so well, you really believe a person could wear the red and blue costume and look good in it, but at the same time plays it with a light touch, in a humorous way. Again, the problem is that they try to do so much in a short time.

Superman, while one of us now, is not a native of Earth, and the movie made an excellent attempt to dramatize this. Especially enjoyable was the scene where Clark Kent wanders in the Arctic wilderness, in exploration of himself and his past. This was a serious attempt, done fairly well.

Toward the end of the movie, however, it suddenly changes into a light-adventure, much like the comics, which is amusing, entertaining, but not entirely consistent with what had gone before.

The entire package is almost like an origin issue of a comic book, where the characters are introduced, some of the future conflicts are sketched in, groundwork is laid for future stories. Indeed, this may be exactly what the movie is.

Already a sequel is planned, so it may be possible that a series could result; like the comics, perhaps, some of the stories could be light-hearted adventure, like the latter part of this movie, some could be more serious, as the early part of the film is.

What I feel is one of the shortcomings of the movie is the big, Superman-like "S" on Jor-El's chest, as if he knew his son, Kal-El, would be a Superman on Earth, and as if Krypton would use the English alphabet. This is silly and unnecessary, especially since Marlon Brando otherwise did an admirable job portraying Superman's father. Perhaps it was so that non-comic book fans could determine the relationship. --Frank Watson

The problem Chris Reeve faced was could he break through our contemporary consciousness long enough to we (1) wouldn't feel foolish going to "SUPERMAN--THE MOVIE" (2) and not ridicule what would in actuality be a ludicrous situation.

How the film achieves this is where its triumph lies. Though it isn't shown in the film, I get the impression that Clark Kent read comic books while growing up in Smallville. Later, as an adult and finding himself in a situation similar to that in the comics he'd once read, Superman goes back to those comics to find a solution to going about in long johns with a degree of self respect; in talking to Jimmy Olsen, cops and other people on the streets, Superman puts us on with straight comic dialogue and makes us laugh at this absurdity while telling us we SHOULD call the police to apprehend the crooks Superman is holding in his grasp. Like in the early Marvels, people react as they really would to a flying man, and Superman, in turn, reacts to them as he would in real life.

This is what gives the film its charm and credibility, by playing the character as it would have actually occured in our real world. Chris Reeves' Superman not only enjoys having these nifty abilities, but he enjoys freaking people out with them. We can tell by the way he grins when he turns away from people, he's having a great time. In fact, If I had those powers, I'd do the exact same thing. I like this Superman, and I can believe it: it's not pompous or silly, just extremely likable.

The whole movie is filled with likable characters or situations. What is more charming than the blind date atop Lois' penthouse, where both Lois and Superman are shy and anxious. And the following flying scene is a touching variation of running through a field in slow motion.

Of course, there are incidentals.

Though it probably wasn't his fault, Gene Hackman's Luthor just didn't come off for me. The Luthor I'm familiar with is too dedicated and efficient in his purpose to surround himself with both the luxury of his underground hideout and a couple buffoons like Eve and Otis. Lex Luthor does not do comedy.

Perhaps I've seen too many George Reeves reruns. I'm aware that in actuality Superman probably could just take off in flight from where he was standing without any preparation. Just the same, I missed the springboard leap.

What was the big deal about sentencing criminals to the Phantom Zone in the beginning? *(I believe they reappear and play a larger role in SUPERMAN II--Bill-Dale)* The time could have seen spent better in showing us something of Krypton other than a solitary cityscape. --Mark Lamport

SUPERMAN is the #1 top grossing film in the country the week of Feb. 14. So far it has made $26,213,715, in 140 theatres in US.

LAST SON OF KRYPTON.

This is a disturbing book. I've always considered Elliot S! Maggin to be just another member of what I call DC's Idiot Squad; writers who were fine storytellers, and technically skilled at their jobs, but never working to their full potential. We all know that Marty Pasko can turn out one hell of a serious story, when he wants to, and yet each month we can go down to the stands and expect 17 pages of SUPERMAN dreck.

With the publication of LAST SON OF KRYPTON, I wonder if Cary Bates is secretly a fine playright, because he's the last of the idiot squad who hasn't shown himself to be superior to the material he produces on a regular schedule.

Unlike MAYHEM OVER MANHATTAN or STALKER FROM THE STARS, LAST SON OF KRYPTON can almost be considered a work of literature, and not just an easy, fun read. Elliot S. Maggin takes on the job of explaining the entire Superman legend (sans Supergirl and pets, of course) within a very few pages, and that he achieves the goal in a very literate, well constructed and tightly written novel is to his ability to make the normal inanities of a Superman comic book seem real, and very possible.

Even though its completely accurate to The Superman Legend, Maggin manages to create some kind of depth with all the characters and situations which appear two dimensional on the four colored page. We see levels of awareness which have apparently existed, but have never before been explored by the comic books. It's as if all the material in the comic books were a waterdown down version of a "reality" seen in the novel.

The complicated story line concerns a lost manuscript of Einstein's, which interest both extraterrestials, and noted terrestial villain, Lex Luthor. The manuscript is also of supreme importance to Kal-El himself, and explains a fascinating connection between Einstein and himself (this is the only liberty taken with The Legend, and is more than excusable because of how well handled it is, and also because it doesn't violate any previous material within The Legend)

There is just too much material here to review and discuss, all of it fascinating. Like the SUPERMAN movie itself, its often incredibly funny (it explains at long last why so many alien races seek out our puny little planet), and yet, it's one of the few recent books to give the concept of the superman any serious consideration. And even the religious significance of Kal-El as galactic savior is considered and developed.

One of the better aspects of LAST SON is the time and space devoted to expanding the rather shaky motivations of Lex Luthor. Rarely has the second lead of this 40 year old series been given the attention he deserved. And as the producers of the film noticed, Lex's motivation (hair loss) is rather silly.

Here Lex's formative years are closely examined, along with what exactly happened inside his lab that fateful day (the full story makes for interesting reading) When you reach the last page, you discover Lex Luthor is no longer the cardboard cut-out supes can known down within 17 pages with minimal trouble. He really is Superman's intellectual superior, and when they are forced to join forces for a few chapters, we see their personality conflicts operate on a fresh, exciting level.

There are dozens of "highlights" in LAST SON, including an appearance by The Guardians of the Galaxy, The Old Timer (the Guardian who fell from grace in the pages of GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW), and finding out how Lois feels about Clark Kent (and its not flattering)

This is a book that has to be read, you can't just read the reviews and pretend like you have. The wonderment inside is unbounded, and I only hope because the film is lacking a novelization (because of the legal hassles with Mario Puzo) a lot of people outside the field and over the age of fifteen will read LAST SON. I hope it will establish Elliot S. Maggin as a recognized talent. Writing such as this deserves exposure. There is never enough to go around.--S.A. Bennett

Lord of the Rings

Before I saw the movie, I was assaulted with negative reviews. Gene Siskel, a fairly respected critic who writes for the Chicago Tribune, got the first word in. He admitted that he had never read the books. He said that he was therefore confused by the storyline. He also said that the film animation was very good overall, but that there were times when the actors were not hidden very well by the animation, and that gave the film a schizophrenic quality.

A few days later, Newsweek echoed these comments (It compared LOTR to another animated movie that was released recently, WATERSHIP DOWN, and LOTR lost the comparison) Also, the group of people that saw LOTR with me had a so-so reaction. Most who hadn't read the trilogy of books from Tolkien were confused. Most who had, felt it didn't live up to the promise of the books. All were glad to have seen it, but...

It would seem easy to write a negative review myself. But I have very undecided feeling for the film. I agree with most of the points made by these reviewers. But rather than add to the negative side, I decided just to comment on the film.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS is in many ways a failure as a cinematic work of art, but it can't be condemned completely because it has some redeeming features.

In many places, the film is fun. It was clean and fresh. Same and Gollum are humorous characters. Gimli has his moments. Even Gandalf.

The landscapes were beautiful. The lay of the land, the countryside impressed me, because I could never visualize the scenery out of the books very well. The rotoscoping technique worked well and was a landmark in animation especially in the area of providing realistic motion of the figures and realistic facial expressions. Sometimes Bakshi seemed to be playing with his facial expressions but most of the time they were very relative to what was going on. Many of the peaceful quiet scenes, such as Lothlorien and the Shire at night were handled well and were really nice.

Since I had heard of Bakshi's lacking as a storyteller, and since I was expecting same, I was surprised at the characterization. There were definite problems with the storytelling, but the characterizations, though not perfect, were unexpectedly good. Gollum was very nice, only maybe not sinister enough. His guiding of Frodo towards Mordor was perfect. Gandalf had humanity in him. And Frodo was good, but I'm sure a lot of Tolkien fans would't like him because he wouldn't fit their conception of him. Sam was a bit of a dimwit, but a lovable one. And that interpretation of him is valid because he was a servant and very naive in the books. Boromir was perfect. And Legolas, Gimli, and Aragorn were close to Tolkien, but Aragorn least of all. He had too weathered a look and feel- Maybe Bakshi intends to play up the transformation he undergoes when he is crowned king. The characters worked especially well in those same quiet scenes.

Without the books, the movie would also seem to be more of the filmic failure it is. It's not really an artful picture, but we tend to overlook that because the novels were. The plot was disjointed, and so much occurred that we were rushed through the storyline in a movie that is basically all plot. There were parts where an explanation was due and parts where the narrator rattled off too many details for the viewer.

The characters lacked real motiviation at times. Basically, this is because the movie was plot-oriented. Motivations aren't understood: we are hurried through the story. In its worst moments, the motivation for doing something appears to be that that is what the character did in the novels.

While some of the animation was tremendous, some was poor. The backgrounds during the battle scenes were usually raging shades of red. That was not realistic in supposedly realistic fight scenes. Magic was treated symbolically, as bursts of light corruscating around the scene. This was confusing. Also at times, during the battle scenes, or in the Prancing Pony, the men of the scene were only shaded, rather than fully drawn. Bakshi apparently wanted realistic different faces on the men. In the same scenes as these shaded men, we Aragorn as a cartoon character. *(I think much of the problems in this film rests in Bakshi's obsessive [and completely misguided] desire to make everything look 'realistic'. His use of rotoscope, the sparse animation which suggested Saturday morning cels rather than Disney Fantasia... realism and objectivity when dealing with Tolkien and when dealing with animation makes for a dull time. And LOTR for me was painfully dull (I didn't read the books-- I suspect I may be the only one in fandom who hasn't) --Bill-Dale)*

Because of the attempt to condense the huge plot into one movie, only the most tense parts of each scene were treated. There were few rests, but almost continuous tension. Fear and a little tenderness were all the emotions that seemed to appear.

Many people, I am sure, were perturbed that the film was only Part One, and that the ad campaign seemed to hide this fact. That was deceptive.

Probably more than anything else the movie serves to show us that LOTR just cannot be transformed to the screen, just as most fantasy cannot.

If we apply my system for judging an item in popular culture (that is to look at the potential of a work and also see how it measured up to that potential), we see that even though LOTR is a masterpiece, there is little potential to make a movie out of it. Bakshi made an effort and a good one at that considering the potential for turning LOTR into a movie. His effort worked well at times, but on the whole it is an inferior film. --Mark Collier

Watership Down

"I announce, with trembling pleasure, the appearance of a great story." That's how the London Times introduced WATERSHIP DOWN to its readers. And it is a great story.

Unfortunately, WATERSHIP DOWN has never enjoyed much of a part in fandom. There hasn't been much talk of it. It's not SF nor comics-related--it is fantasy, though. It's been popular on college campuses, but now it's an animated movie, and is more accessible, so maybe more people will be touched by it than those that already have been.

WATERSHIP DOWN in hardcover carries some impressive statistics for a book which has its roots in bedtime stories that author Richard Adams used to tell his daughters. Fourteen days after publication, it became Number One on the New York Times Bestseller List, and it stayed there nearly a year. This was in 1972.

It is a story about rabbits, but they are people as well. In the story, a small group of friends leave their "home" and set out to build a new life, one that is their own, built on better principles. They escape Man's destruction, a decadent rabbit society, and a socially ruled totalitarianistically [! --*Bill-Dale*)

Adventure abounds, and one of the book's good points is that it's a tremendously exciting adventure story. It also makes stands on several contemporary issues: against Man's pillaging of the natural enviroment, and against societies that are deteriorating.

Adams creates a world here, with conviction that forces belief. Using rabbits is a tremendous literary device in the novel, because we see life differently and fresh through their eyes--and we become one of them. We wish we could help them, or at least be friends, but ultimately both worlds, ours and theirs, never merge. Another, more common device used is that Adams creates a whole mythology in his world.

A movie made from this sort of book is always something somewhat less. A novel provides a much more complete involvement. Adams rich atmosphere, descriptions, depth, and explanations are missed in the movie version, but that is to be expected.

The atmosphere of the trip itself is lacking a little. The trips seem shorter in than in the book, and conversation appears to be less casual than it would be in a real trip. This too is expected.

WATERSHIP DOWN, on the whole though, is a faithful and successful adaptation. I recommend the movie, but if possible, read the novel first.

The pacing is very good. Different physical features serve to help the audience distinguish among the rabbits. Ol' Zero Mostel really got into his character, a friendly bird with an Eastern accent. The animated movement of the animals is very realistic, and the landscapes are very nice, especially compared to the dull flat work we see on Saturday morning. (By the way, the studio that produced this movie was built from scratch). Three-dimensional work is well-used here. The layouts and camera angles are well-done. Martin Rosen is a very competent director.

The story has funny moments and touching ones. In the theater several rows behind me was a girl who loved the show. She couldn't contain her feelings, and I heard her warning "Oh no. Look out!" in moments of danger, and her approval in times of joy and victory (It was wild to see her carry on)

But the story has a deeper meaning to me. It supports anyone such as me, who has ever been disillusioned with society and who has ever wanted to build his own life differently from the system, based on other principles, whether that means living ascetically in a small community, for example, in the mountains, or just not settling down with the two and a half kids, etc. in the suburbs.

--Mark Collier

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. Directed by Phil Kaufman.

This remake of the 1957 Don Siegel-directed, Kevin McCarthy starring sf film improves upon the original. Superbly directed, beautifully lit, and scored--it is easily the best film of 1978.

It functions well as a statement for the 70's--the small town setting of the original has been updated and changed to San Francisco. The film creates paranoia so intense you can't trust your friends for weeks after. Kaufman uses odd camera angles, movements, and shadows to their ultimate effect; Denny Zeitlin's jazz score is tremendous (see it in Dolby Stereo if you can)--the sound effects are brilliantly placed.

The film functions as an allegory for the age --Leonard Nimoy, as a hip new wave psychologist, in his calm, controlled manner says "Don't be afraid of new concepts" The ME Generation meets pods from outer space, and somehow it all works together. As Kaufman says, "The world is becoming so bureaucratic that every night it seems that a little of our souls is lost. Now who's to say that in our world it might be better not to have love or feeling? I'm not making that moral judgement necessarily, but in my movie it's clear that we should have emotions and the loss of them is something to concern ourselves with. I use the film's fear to stimulate people. Keep running, man, don't stop now."

The film works on two levels, one the simply escape-from-the-aliens ploy, the other retain-the-ability-to-love. Kaufman has updated the film to make it, as a 1978 film, far more important and significant, than the fifties' film was.

Trivia buffs note Don Siegel and Kevin McCarthy appear in Kaufman's version (McCarthy almost being run over by Donald Sutherland's car while screaming "They're here, they're here!")

Take a look at your friends and the mellow, uninvolved, laid back 70's. Perhaps McCarthy is right.

--*Bill-Dale Marcinko*

I have used a number rating system for the following movies (Spanky, on the other hand, did not, my fault, not his). 1=Pretty awful, 5=Okay, 10=Brilliant.

HOW NOT TO DO A SYMBOLIC FILM:
(QUINTET, Directed by Robert Altman,
INTERIORS, Directed by Woody Allen,
DAYS OF HEAVEN, Directed by Terry Malick

The problem with doing a symbolic or allegorical film is you can't make it look like one. Screaming out each successive frame "Look! Look! This has meaning!" only tends to bore the audience. Those it doesn't bore are the pre-defined audience of film majors and pretentious people all who go in, nose high in air, ready to bathe in "art", that elitist concept created by the practicioners of same who also like pretense.

QUINTET makes a fatal error--it presents a society post-New Ice Age lacking in direction, meaning, and hope whose only passion is the GAME, "Quintet." The error is that Altman never even lets us in on the rules so we can make the proper symbolic connection ("Life is just a game, without purpose; the game is ultimately a game of death") The blatent symbolism (love those pictures of starving children on the wall, Bob. How many times do you have to show them to us before we understand your message, huh, Bob?) and confusion make this film embarassing to watch, but worse than that confusing--the nagging sense that we have been cheated. (3)

No less embarassing is Woody Allen's INTERIORS, which is great, I suppose, for people who have never seen a Bergman film before. I found it excruciating to watch--Remember that idiot from Columbia in the movie line at ANNIE HALL (when Allen pulls out Marshall McLuhan?)--he could have been discussing INTERIORS. Allen seems to have a compulsion to make a "serious"--except that each shot says, I'm serious, I'm serious. Lacking Woody Allen's wonderful sense of humor it falls apart--the film is as vacuous as the people it seeks to portray--caught in the pretense of art and intellectualism. Bergman plagerisms abound. I keep wondering if this is satire or what. Don't think it is. Stay away from it. (4)

DAYS OF HEAVEN, on the other hand, aside from just possibly being the most beautiful movie, cinematographically speaking, of all time (not to mention great use of Dolby), presents us with successive images, and by the combination of those images, we begin to feel, rather than analyze the meanings: Death of innocence, the parasitic and destructive character of American industrialism (Notice how close the machines come to slashing up the people in this film). A few drawbacks, but minor ones, Terry Malick so carefully constructs his scenes, that Gere and Adams come across as merely posing, rather than acting--but what posing. Linda Ganz's voice over narration is haunting, for sure. (10)

THE WARRIORS. Directed by Walter Hill.

Far more than just a cheap exploitation vehicle and headline-maker (it has been causing violence in LA and NYC and is being pulled out of some theatres)--existential play disguised as an action pic. Hill can direct action as good or better than Siegel or Peckinpah. The film is so much fun to watch (especially if you are into the film technique end, as I am)--dollies, wipes, pans and beautiful photography abound (Arnold Laslow is director of photography). A cast of complete unknowns romp through this brilliant street gang parade. More next issue of AFTA--I just wanted to mention it and urge you to see it before it disappears. (10)

AUTUMN SONATA. Directed by Ingmar Bergman.

Does everything right that Woody Allen tried for in INTERIORS, but failed at. This is Bergman's most accessible film--a good starting place if you are one of those unfortunate few who are not part of Bergman's universe of fans.

Liv Ullman and Ingrid Bergman play daughter and mother in an intense exploration of the anguish of failed parent-child love. The emotional confrontations and bitter self revealing and self-hating dialogue is so powerful you leave the theatre weak, drained, guilty, upset. Ingrid Bergman should win an Oscar for her performance... (10)

THE BIG FIX. Directed by Jeremy Paul Kagan.

Emotionally affecting film about Moses Wine, who is sort of Sam Spade-if-he-had-lived-through-the-60's-instead-of-World-War-II. Dreyfuss turns in a great performance, and the film, especially for anyone who felt the same nostalgic pang for the 60's that Moses feels, or knows enough about hard-boiled detective fiction to see what Roger Simon does to update/parody it, it's God-damned heartbreaking. Far superior to Kagan's film, HEROES, which was never sure where it was going, THE BIG FIX functions on many levels, and does it well on all counts. Along with Elliot Gould's performance in THE LONG GOODBYE, this may be another addition to the growing list of "soft-boiled" detectives. (9)

BIG WEDNESDAY. Directed by John Milius.

A film which appeared in the Summer of '78 and disappeared almost entirely (I only know of 3 people who have seen it, one of them is me)--find this film if you can. It's a loving tribute to male-male friendship, a beautiful surfing movie, and (told in epic, four act style, not unlike THE DEERHUNTER) it is about the death of the human spirit, growing up, and not being able to come back. The performances shine all around, and the film almost made me cry. One of the best of the year, along with DAYS OF HEAVEN. (10)

BLOODBROTHERS. Directed by Robert Mulligan.

Like John Milius' BIG WEDNESDAY, another great movie that bit the dust last year. Robert Mulligan's BLOODBROTHERS was left virtually unnoticed--and unseen, before officially biting the dust. It seems that Warner Brothers, in their all-knowing, all-powerful corporate wisdom, has decided that there is no market for either film. Mulligan's film, based upon a terrific novel by Richard Price, is outrageous, courageous movie-making, Hollywood at its finest. The acting was top-notch, too, particularly Richard Gere in a magnificent "star" performance. With his superbly sensitive work in DAYS OF HEAVEN and BLOODBROTHERS, Gere proves that he's more than just another pretty face.

--Spanky Paurich

BOYS FROM BRAZIL. Directed by Richard Schaffner

Piece of shit: Gregory Peck looks moronic in white make up and a ridiculous accent, Olivier is great, but seems to be acting for the wrong movie, with his comic Jew against Peck's (supposedly menacing) Nazi. The plot (which concerns cloning and a scheme to re-duplicate the enviroment which spawned Hitler) is far more interesting than the actual execution (bad pun) and if I describe it to you here, you may go out and see the movie one day. Don't. It is inept and pointless--the ending seems to go on just to fill up the two hour running time. No suspense, no thrills, no good. (2)

THE BRINK'S JOB. Directed by William Friedkin.

William Friedkin, is a supremely gifted filmmaker. No, not just a technician: (although like all good directors he is that, too) but an auteur with an distinctive vision running throughout all of his films. While Brink's is lesser Friedkin and not in the same league as Sorcerer or The Exorcist, it is certainly worth taking a good look at. The movie has been doing nicely at the box-office but for all the wrong reasons. While funny and genuinely light-hearted stuff, there is an underlining pathos which makes it stick to the ribs and how many caper movies can you say that about today? --Spanky Paurich

THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY.

Straightforward, chronological bio film of the 50's rock star. Nothing special in terms of filmic technique, but Gary Busey gives such an amazing performance as Holly that the film is consistently fascinating (although the events of Holly's life are not necessarily the stuff of which movies are made). (7)

COMES A HORSEMAN. Directed by Alan Pakula.

An offbeat western with very little punch. Sure-the scenery's pretty and the shots are evocative, and Jane Fonda and James Caan never looked or acted better, but even in its bid for "unconventionality" (a woman as lead, which really is not that new) it is extremely conventional. I don't generally like Westerns, so I should be fair. As a Western, it rates an (8). As a movie, a (6).

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE. Directed by James Fargo.

Mindless pap, stupid jokes; a few funny scenes, but, mostly Redneck appeal--the baboon turns in a much better performance than Clint Eastwood and the no-talent singer-girlfriend. Only for the baboon, this gets a (3)

GREASE. Directed by Randall Kleiser.

Did not despise this film as much as I expected. The musical numbers are really stunning, although I do wish there was a bit more attention paid to plot and technical continuity. Stockard Channing is great. As a social document, it is interesting to see how disco and 50's music blends together so well, and to see how a 70's hair dryer made it to the 50's. The themes of this movie are those of mindless fun, which accounts for its nationwide popularity in the summer of '78. Travolta still sucks it, though. (5)

HARPER VALLEY, P.T.A.

This is an immensely likable film, if just a bit obvious (it expands on the characters of the song accurately with little addition). It's great to see Pat Paulsen, and Barbara Eden is just terrific. (7)

KING OF THE GYPSIES. Directed by Frank Pierson.

Before Frank Pierson took over directorial chores for Dino de Laurentiis' comic strip adaptation of Peter Maas' fine book of the same name, nearly every bankable American filmmaker had had a shot at it. How Pierson, a grossly incompetent boob whose two previous assignments (1976's disastrous A STAR IS BORN and 1970's dreary LOOKING GLASS WAR) were notorious artistic flops, managed to secure this plum assignment is beyond me. While Pierson does his best to copy Coppola's GODFATHER movies every step of the way, the film which GYPSIES most reminded me of was Daniel Petrie's THE BETSY. I'm sure that Pierson wouldn't be very pleased with that comparison. --Spanky Paurich

MORE FILM REVIEWS

MAGIC. Directed by Richard Attenborough.

Someone should teach Attenborough the principles of creating suspense (cuts, camera movement, interior scene movement)--this is where the problems in this film lie. His scenes are just too long and camera just too stationary for this movie to get really exciting. Anthony Hopkins and Ann-Margaret's stunning performances still give this film credibility and power and creates a kind of internal suspense (helped, of course, by Bill Goldman's fine screenplay). (8)

MIDNIGHT EXPRESS. Directed by Alan Parker.

Like jerking off with spiked gloves, going to see this movie is an act of pure masochism, but, hey, c'mon, get outta here, I had fun. The photography's a bit too beautiful for the gritty subject, but Brad Davis' intense performance made this movie, at times a bit much, good cinema. (9)

MOVIE, MOVIE. Directed by Stanley Donen.

Right, this is the picture that's being advertised as two--two movies in one. Stanley Donen's triumphant return from the dead: (his last film was 1975's much pissed upon LUCKY LADY) was one of 1978's major delights. While I personally preferred DYNAMITE HANDS, the 40's style boxing melodrama, BAXTER'S BEAUTIES OF 1933, a glossy backstage musical, has a lot to offer, too, not the least of which is the chance to catch Donen orchestrating some swell all-singing, all-dancing numbers in his best SINGIN' IN THE RAIN tradition once again. As Joey Popchik in DYNAMITE HANDS, Harry Hamlin was my favorite discovery of the year. The kid is dynamite alright and I hope to be hearing a lot from him in the very near future (My number is 212-254-6442, Harry, so why not give me a call sometime soon, okay?) --Spanky Faurich

OLIVER'S STORY. Directed by John Korty.

Implicit message: only the rich fall in love in this insipid remake of LOVE STORY. Lacks talent, lacks originality, lacks any kind of worth. Ryan O'Neal falls in love with Candice Bergen, who he expects to be poor, but turns out to be rich. At the end of the movie, for little reason, they learn to live with their stinking wealth, and the audience is released from this torture. Every time the love scenes come, the old LOVE STORY theme swells up, obviously to make the audience forget that O'Neal and Bergen look simply embarrassed to be in this movie in the first place. The only worth this may have is to get a look at Ryan O'Neal's pimply ass. (-1)

A WEDDING. Directed by Robert Altman.

Blackly funny comedy in which all the characters are reduced to quirks of behavior (epilepsy, homosexual flirting (Dr. Osgood Van Moot, indeed), and variant forms of lust) Filled with amazing moments and hilarious lines; resembles M*A*S*H more than NASHVILLE, in that it is not as "serious" a film. The funniest movie of the year, with ANIMAL HOUSE coming in a close second. (10)

WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN. Directed by Karel Reiz.

Slam-bang adventure tale which hints at the 60's only obliquely. Pessimistic philosophy, reductive heroism (although Nick Nolte's character is heroic, he's too cold and pragmatic to be a hero in the traditional sense) as the goal is to smuggle heroin into the US, Nolte, Tuesday Weld, and Michael Moriarty turn in gripping portrayals of post 60's nihilist characters, especially Nolte, who has worked out the problems that made THE DEEP's performance really bad. (9)

THE WIZ. Directed by Sidney Lumet.

The songs are competent, but certainly not memorable. The interpretation of Frank Baum's original material (and the '39 movie) does little to improve upon it or contribute to it in any way, except a kind of self-conscious high school talent show parody. Diana Ross is miscast, far too old--the dialogue was downright inane at times--the sets and costumes were very ugly-art deco-spray paint-Harlem sets which hinted at 60's psychedelia. Lena Horne was absolutely humiliated (perhaps I've seen CARRIE too many times, but did Lena's speech at the end remind you of Piper Laurie's ravings?), and everytime those strange angel-babies (which looked like they were stapled to that ridiculous sky) appeared in the background, I laughed out loud. Ted Ross and Nipsey Russell occasionally transcend what is a poorly packaged, ultimately tedious musical. (4)

DIARY ENTRIES

JANUARY 21, 1979. ENTRY 8.

I called Eric Sanderson. My high was running out. I needed a refilling. No answer. Sometimes Eric didn't answer phones. He was somewhere else. The old anger, the old sadness, the old loneliness started to seep through. I'll go to his apartment.

Eric's apartment. I pushed open the door. Unlocked. Not even closed all the way. I didn't hear anything.

And then I saw him. He was lying on the floor-- someone had cracked the right side of his skull in with a hammer or something. His brains, all pink and shiny, spilled out onto the floor. He was naked. Someone took a needle, a smack needle, and ripped it across his chest, his legs, his face. The thin deep lines criss-crossing and pumping blood from the crevices looked like a relief map of Ohio.

"Eric?" I felt for his pulse. None. I called the only cop I knew.

Merkle rushed in the door, catching his cigarette in the doorway and snapping it in two. "Billy, I came right away. What is--Fucking Jesus!"

"I just...found...him...like that." Bill-Dale was shaking. He ran over to Merkle and hugged him. His body convulsed as he sobbed quietly. Merkle squeezed him tighter.

"Hey, kid, you're my little brother. It's gonna be alright...It's gonna...Hey, bro, you go lie down. I'll call someone to clean him up..."

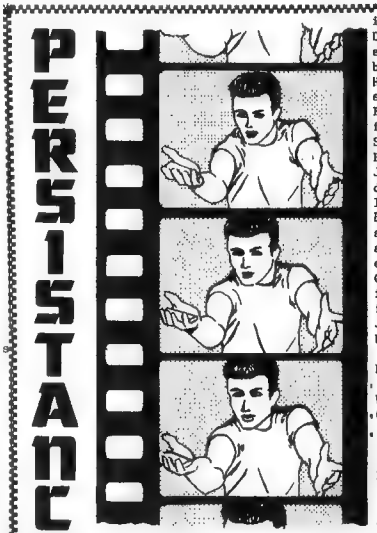
JANUARY 22, 1979, ENTRY 9.

I am thinking about my beating. Could a friend have done it? Then what does that say about my friendships? I am thinking about my friend R----'s suicide. Why did he do it? What does that say? What can't I be taken to a place where I won't have to find answers?

I'm not a good writer. I'm a hack, a bit more crazy or stupid or reckless than most, but I don't have anything much to say. I can't help people with their problems (Oh, remove the speck from thy own eye first, oh, yeah, oh, yeah). I am living only for the illusion that I can do these things.

I am dispensible to my friends. I may be clever and (perhaps) even amusing to my friends for short periods of time. None of friends ever care to make any kind of emotional COMMITTMENT. Is it my fault? Am I not caring enough? Have I reached out?

I have been more than two decades on this planet. My friends are happily married (are they?), have steady jobs (do they?), and give all the outward signs of happiness. No one wants to travel the US with me; no one wants to scheme, to dream, to pretend with me. I want to stay forever young, but Jesus, it's a fucking lonely life to have.



film news

The following films are upcoming releases. Where known, the date of release is in ( ).

AGENCY is directed by George Kaczender from a Noel Hynd script (based on the Paul Gottlieb novel), with Robert Mitchum, Lee Majors, Valerie Perrine. About an ad agency using subliminal ads...Bob Fosse's *ALL THE JAZZ* is an autobio tale directed by Fosse, script by Fosse & Robert Alan Authur. Roy Scheider, Ann Reinking, Ben Vereen, Cliff Gorman, and Jessica Lange star. Columbia... *ALPHAVILLE*, the 1965 French sf film will be remade by Deborah Harry (Blondie) and Robert Fripp, who will write songs. Chris Stein & avant-gardist Amos Poe will direct (with an assist from Nicholas Roeg)...John Travolta has left Paramount's *AMERICAN GIGOLO (written and directed by Paul Schraeder)* and has been replaced by Richard Gere as lead...*AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL* is discussing a merger with Filmways...*AND JUSTICE FOR ALL* is a legal drama with Dustin Hoffman & Lee Strasberg... *Coppola's APOCALYPSE WHEN? NEXT YEAR* from UA will premiere August 15, 1979 at the Zierfield in New York City. Stars Marlon Brando, Robert DuVall, Martin Sheen, Dennis Hooper in this epic Vietnam war drama...*ASHANTI* from Columbia stars Michael Caines, Peter Ustinov, Bill Holden, Rex Harrison...*AVALANCHE EXPRESS* is a spy thriller from 20th Century Fox (late Fall 1979)...*BABY BOY* is a story about 2 friends who meet in a prison camp in the deep South. Script/direction by Oliver (MIDNIGHT EXPRESS) Stone...*THE BALTIMORE BULLET*, with James Coburn, Omar Sherif, Ronee Blakely and directed by Robert Ellis Miller is pool hustling story which began production Feb. 28... *BEAR ISLAND*, directed by Don Sharp from a script by David Butler, Tony Williamson from an Alistair MacLean novel, stars Donald Sutherland, Richard Widmark, Vanessa Redgrave, Christopher Lee...*Hal Ashby's BEING THERE*, from a Jerzy Kosinski script (from his novel) features Peter Sellers, Shirley MacLaine & Jack Warden...*BELLE STARR* will be produced by Herb Jaffe, from Speer Morgan's western novel. ...*THE BIG RED ONE* from UA features Mark Hamill, Lee Marvin. A war movie (Summer 1979) ...*THE BLACK STALLION*, the film version of Walter Farley's children's book is from UA. Cast: Teri Garr, Mickey Rooney. (Summer 1979) ...*BOARDWALK* is a love story with Ruth Gordon & Lee Strasberg...*BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY* is from the Ron Kovic book. Al Pacino plays Kovic from a script by Oliver Stone (MIDNIGHT EXPRESS)...Kurt Vonnegut's *BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS* will probably not be made by Robert Altman, as reported...*BREAKING AWAY* is about a 19-year old growing up in Middle America. Produced/directed by Peter Yates for Fox (August 1979)...*BRUBAKER* with Robert Redford, directed by Bob Rafelson, is for 20th Fox. (1980)...*BUTCH & SUNDANCE--THE EARLY DAYS* has William Katt. From Fox (June 25, 1979)...*BYE, SEE YOU MONDAY* from the novel by Roger Fournier will be directed by Muarice Dugowson... *CABOBLANCO* with Charles Bronson, Dominque Sanda, Fernando Rey, and Jason Robards has a script by Milton Gelman, directed by J. Lee Thompson...*CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'* stars Glynnis O'Connor & James Van Patten, for AIP...*THE CAT AND THE CANARY* is a British mystery with Honor Blackman, Edward Fox, Wendy Hiller, Olivia Hussey, Carol Lynley, directed by Radley Metzger...*THE CHAMP*, screenplay by Spencer Eastman, Walter Newman, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, features Jon Voight, Faye Dunaway, Jack Warden, and Ricky Schroeder in the Jackie Cooper role. From UA (June 22, 1979)...*THE CHANGELING*, directed by Peter Medak, script by William Gray, Adriana Morrall stars George C. Scott & Trish Van Devere ...*C.H.O.M.P.S.* is from AIP. Valerie Bertinelli, Conrad Bain (June 1979)...*COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER*, the Loretta Lynn biopic, will be directed by Michael Apted, feature Sissy Spacek & Tommy Lee Jones. Universal...*COLD RIVER* is a wilderness drama produced/written/

FILM NEWS CONTINUED

directed by Fred Sullivan. With Richard Jaeckel, Brad Sullivan, Augusta Dabney (May 1979) ...*CORKY* directed by cinematographer Gordon Willis, with screenplay by Barry Slogel stars Talia Shire, Elizabeth Ashley & Kay Medford... *CRISS CROSS* is from Paramount. Harmon Henkin scripts from his novel, Paul Williams directs ...*CUBA* stars Sean Connery, from UA (Fall '79) ...*DOUBLE NEGATIVE* based on the Ross MacDonald novel "The Three Roads" with Michael Sarrazin, Susan Clark, Howard Duff, and Anthony Perkins will be directed by George Bloomfield...*DREAMER* from 20th Fox, directed by Noel Nusseck and starring Tim Matheson & Susan Blakely will be out last week in April 1979...*EASTER EGG HUNT* is a project which'll begin in Late Fall 1979 from Robert Altman's LIONS GATE FILMS...*THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN*, directed by Sydney Pollack from a script by Alvin Sargent has Robert Redford, Jane Fonda, Willie Nelson, and John Saxon, for Columbia... *ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ* will reunite director Don Siegel with Clint Eastwood (they teamed for DIRTY HARRY). Patrick McGoohan also stars in this Paramount flick...*FAIR GAME* is Brian dePalma's next film, a suspense tale about a composer...*FAST CHARLIE...THE MOONBEAM RIDER* has David Carradine & Brenda Vaccaro, from Universal...*FATSO* will be written and directed by Anne Bancroft, for 20th Fox (1980)...*FINAL PAYMENTS*, from the Mary Gordon novel, is Diane Keaton's next film. From Orion Pics... *FIRST BLOOD* stars Al Pacino, for Warner Bros. ...*FOR THE FIRST TIME* will be the first feature produced and written by Dyan Cannon... *A FORCE OF ONE*, directed by Paul Aaron has Jennifer O'Neill, Chuck Norris, and James Whitmore, Jr...*FREESTYLE* from Columbia stars Susan Clark...*THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* will be produced and directed by Karel Reisz (WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN), Harold Pinter writes the script from the John Fowles novel...*FULL MOON IN AUGUST* stars Joseph Bottoms, from Paramount...*GANDHI* has the MAGIC team of director Richard Attenborough and Anthony Hopkins...*THE GODFATHER III* is being written by Mario Puzo. John Travolta and Eric Roberts (KING OF THE GYPSIES) are being discussed as stars. Coppola will be advisor...*THE GOLDEN GATE*, the Alistair MacLean novel will be done by Sir Lew Grade...*GOLDENGIRL* features James Coburn, Leslie Caron, and Robert Culp, for Avco Embassy...*THE GONG SHOW MOVIE*, produced by Chuck Barris, will be written and directed by Robert Downey...*GORP* will be written & produced by Jeffrey Konvitz, directed by Joe Ruben, for AIP...*GRACE* is a LION'S GATE FILM directed by Bill Tannen with a Summer 1979 start...*GUYANA--THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY* will be released in May 1979 with Stuart Whitman, Gene Barry, John Ireland, Mel Ferrer and Bradford Dillman. It's amazing how fast a film can get made when you really try... *Milos Forman's HAIR* from UA will premiere March 14, 1979 at the Ziegfield in New York City...*HANOVER STREET* by writer/director Peter Hyams (CAPRICORN ONE) and music by John Barry (in Dolby stereo) is a wartime love story from Columbia with Harrison Ford, Lesley Anne Down, Christopher Plummer, and Richard Masur...*HEALTH* is Robert Altman's current film (began production Feb. 20, 1979) About the health food biz, starring Glenda Jackson, Carol Burnett, James Garner, and Lauren Bacall, for 20th Fox. (Christmas 1979) ...*HEART BEAT* is a Warner Bros. film starring Sissy Spacek and Nick Nolte...*HEARTLAND* is a comedy/drama written and directed by Michael Crichton (ANDROMEDA STRAIN, COMA) with a $5-7 million budget...*HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT* stars James Caan, from UA (Spring 1979)...*THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD--PART I* is Mel Brooks next film, for 20th Fox (1980)...*Floyd Mutrux's HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS* is about an outrageous car club, set on Halloween night, 1965...*HOOPER* will have a sequel, but Reynolds hasn't been signed yet...*HORN* has got a new director (tv director William Wiard). The Warner Bros. film stars Steve McQueen, Linda Evans...*THE HURRICANE* is from Paramount. Cast: Timothy Bottoms, Jason Robards, Mia Farrow, Trevor Howard... *JAMES & JANE* stars James Caan and Genevieve Bujold, from UA...*JUST A GIGOLO* stars David Bowie, Kim Novak, David Hemmings, Maria Schell, and Marlene Dietrich...*JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT* stars Ali McGraw, Alan King, Myrna Loy, Dina Merrill, Keenan Wynn, and Tony Roberts. Script by Jay Presson Allen, directed by Sidney Lumet, for Warner Bros... *THE KING OF ROCK AND ROLL* features an Elvis lookalike in the title role; written by George Klein, it begins production April 25, 1979. (Christmas 1979)...*THE LADY VANISHES* remake stars Elliot Gould, Cybil Shepherd and Angela Lansbury...*THE LAST EMBRACE* is directed by Jonathan Demme from a script by David Shaber (from the novel "The 13th Man"), music by Miklos Rozsa. Roy Scheider, Janet Margolin, and Christopher Walken star in this suspense/love story...*THE LAST MARRIED-COUPLE IN AMERICA* is a romantic comedy directed by Gilbert Cates (I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER, SUMMER WISHES, WINTER DREAMS) for Universal. Stars George Segal, Natalie Wood, Richard Benjamin, Dom DeLuise, Marilyn Sokol, Valerie Harper, and Bob Dishy. Cates' THE PROMISE is currently in release...*THE LAST OF THE MARX BROTHERS WRITERS* play will be filmed...*LEGACY* features Katherine Ross, Sam Elliot, Roger Daltrey. From Universal...*LITTLE MISS MARKER*, from the Damon Runyon story, script and direction by Walter Bernstein will star Walter Matthau & Julie Andrews. From Universal ...*A LITTLE ROMANCE* is from Warner Bros. Cast: Laurence Olivier, Sally Kellerman (April '79) ...*THE LONELY LADY* has Susan Blakely in this Universal drama...*Bernardo Bertolucci's LOST AND FOUND* will be released through 20th Fox (1980)...Robert Ludlum's novel's THE HOLCROFT COVENANT and THE CHANCELLOR MANUSCRIPT are being developed as films...*LUNA* directed by Bernardo Bertolucci stars Jill Clayburgh, for 20th Fox. (Sept. 1979)...*MARTHA* is Robert Altman's next film after HEALTH. Production begins Summer 1979...*THE MIRROR CRACK'D* is an EMI Miss Marple vehicle. It starts production in Spring 1979. EMI will alternate Miss Marple, Poirot, Miss Marple yearly... *MONSIGNORE* is directed by Martin Ritt ror 20th Fox (1980)...*MORE AMERICAN GRAFFITI* will be written and directed by Bill Norton... *MOVIE, MOVIE, TOO*, is the sequel which will star George C. Scott...*THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT IN GEORGIA*, from the Vicki Lawrence song will be produced as a film from a Carol Blake script by AIP. Shooting begins early '80 ...*1941* is Steven Spielberg's current film. Screenplay by Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale, from a story by Gale, Zemeckis and John Milius (who also is exec. prod.). Stars Dan Ackroyd, Ned Beatty, John Belushi, Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton, Christopher Lee, Tim Matheson, Robert Stack, Warren Oates...*NINE TO FIVE* has Jane Fonda. From 20th Fox...*NORMA RAE*, directed by Martin Ritt is a drama with Sally Field, Beau Bridges, from 20th Fox. (March 2, 1979)... *NORTH DALLAS FORTY* stars Nick Nolte as the football hero, from Paramount...*OLD BOYFRIENDS* directed by Nashville writer Joan Tewkesbury, written and produced by Paul Schraeder. With John Belushi, Keith Carradine, John Houseman.. *THE ONION FIELD* is written by Joseph Wambaugh from his own novel, directed by Howard Becker. John Savage, Ronny Cox, Franklyn Seales star. *THE OTIS REDDING STORY* will be done by producer Phil Walden, president of Capricorn Records and Redding's former manager. Teddy Pendergrass stars...*PARADISE* from Columbia stars Paul Newman...*THE PASSAGE* is a war film from UA with Chris Lee, and Anthony Quinn. (Spring 1979)...*PICTURE PLACE* will be done by Columbia, from the Paul Thoreaux novel...*THE PILOT*, directed by Cliff Robertson, script by Robert P. Davis & Robertson, stars Robertson, Dana Andrews, Gordon MacRae, Milo O'Shea, and Frank Converse...*Robert Altman's A PERFECT COUPLE* will be released April 4, 1979, only 2 months after his current QUINTET. It's a romantic comedy about a middle aged man (Paul Dooley) and a young female rock singer (Marta Heflin). Script by Alan Nichols and Altman. From 20th Fox...An EDGAR ALLEN POE biopic is being discussed. Possible leads: Keith Carradine, Peter Fonda...*PORRIDGE* is from ITC, written by Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, directed by Clement, starring Ronnie Barker... *POWER* from Columbia stars Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon & Michael Douglas...*PRINCE OF THE CITY* the Robert Daly novel will be directed by Brian DePalma, from a David Rabe (STICKS AND BONES, STREAMERS) script...*PROPHECY* is from Paramount with Talia Shire and Robert Foxworth ...George Lucas wants to do *THE RADIOLAND MURDERS*, a pulp mystery project...*RAISE THE TITANIC* is from Sir Lew Grade (Christmas 1979) ...*RICH KIDS*, from Altman's LIONS GATE FILMS, will be directed by Robert Young, written by Judith Ross, and distributed through UA (Fall 1979)...Da Ramones will star in *ROCK AND ROLL HIGH SCHOOL*, from Roger Corman's New World Pictures. The film ends with the blowing up of the school building. The Ramones will do a soundtrack, possibly recording a song by Paul McCartney, which was originally written for HEAVEN CAN WAIT, called "Have We Met Somewhere Before?"...*ROCKY II--REDEMPTION* is directed by Stallone from his own script (oh, no), and stars Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young, Burgess Meredith. It also features a special appearance by Philly mayor Frank Rizzo *THE ROSE* with Bette Midler is a pseudo-Janis Joplin bio, from 20th Fox (Christmas 1979)... *THE RUNNER STUMBLES*, written by Milan Stitt from his B'Way play, will be produced and directed by Stanley Kramer. With Dick Van Dyke, Kathleen Quinlan, Maureen Stapleton, Ray Bolger, Tammy Grimes, Beau Bridges... *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER* will be released this spring in a PG version (7 minutes of sex and bad language edited out), from Paramount, in order to reach even a larger audience...*THE SEA KINGS* is a pirate film written by Bill Goldman, directed by Richard Lester, produced by Joseph Levine...*THE SENATOR* stars Alan Alda, Melvyn Douglas, Barbara Harris, from Universal...*SEVEN NIGHTS IN JAPAN*, from Paramount, has Michael York...*SHARKEY'S MACHINE*, from the William Diehl novel, stars Burt Reynolds as an Atlanta detective trying to solve the murder of a call girl who was having an affair with a US senator...*SPECIAL EFFECTS*, the novel by Harriet Frank about a woman story editor in Hollywood, has been sold to UA...*THE SQUEEZE* is a suspense/comedy from Warners, with Stacy Keach and Lino Ventura...*STARTING OVER*, directed by Alan Pakula from a script by James L. Brooks is from Paramount. Has got Burt Reynolds, Jill Clayburgh, Candice Bergen, Charles Durning and Mary Kay Place...*STEEL* stars Art Carney, Lee Majors, Jennifer O'Neill, George Kennedy... *SUFFER OR DIE* , from a screenplay by Anthony Burgess, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, will star Giancarlo Giannini, Mick Jagger, and Amy Irving...*SUNBURN* stars Farrah Fawcett Majors, Charles Grodin, Art Carney, Eleanor Parker, and William Daniels...*THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* from Columbia, stars Terence Stamp, Peter Ustinov...*TITLE SHOT*, directed by Richard Gabourie, script by John Saxton, stars Tony Curtis...*UP YOUR LADDER*, directed by Phil Kaufman from his script, has Chuck McCann, Mitzi McCall...*THE VISITOR from AIP* stars John Huston, Shelly Winters, Glenn Ford. *VOICES* is a love story with Amy Irving, Michael Ontkean, Alex Ricco. Directed by Robert Markowitz, songs by Jimmy Webb (May 1979)...*WANDA NEVADA* is a comedy/adventure with Peter Fonda and Brooke Shields, from UA (Spring 1979)...*Richard Price's THE WANDERERS* will be directed by Phil Kaufman (INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS)...*WILLIE AND PHIL* will be written and directed by Paul Mazursky, for 20th Fox (1980)...*WINTER KILLS* stars Elizabeth Taylor, Jeff Bridges, John Huston, and Anthony Perkins, for Avco Embassy...*THE WOMAN INSIDE* is written and directed by Joseph Van Winkle. *YESTERDAY*, about a GI defector who escapes to Canada will be directed by Larry Kent, stars Vince Van Patten & Eddie Albert...

Show you belong!

In an effort to raise money for AFTA #4, I'm selling silk-screened AFTA t-shirts. I make $1.00 per shirt- this money goes to help AFTA continue, not in my pocket. The t-shirts are printed on both sides:

FRONT: "AFTA. THE MAGAZINE OF TEMPORARY CULTURE."

BACK: "AFTA, AT LAST. A MAGAZINE FOR THE REST OF US."

The shirts are $5.00 each, plus 50¢ for postage. Please include your size--shirts are available in small, medium, large, and extra large. Help me out, ok? --Bill-Dale

SEND TO: Bill-Dale Marcinko
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New Brunswick, NJ 08903

ALL THE SAME

On the beach in the sand
I made love to a man
It brought me to a revelation.
Here's my legacy:

My father never kissed me
He used to give me slaps and shoves
Only sissies asked for hugs
He gave me tanks and guns to love

Son, stand tall against the wall
Face the firing squad and fall
The blood that's spattered on the wall
Will be the measure of your courage

So I threw my body onto fields
I pushed, I shoved, I seized the ball
I took pride in homocide
I learned my lessons well.

Dad looked on so proud
With sad, detached, and distant eyes
He handed me a glowing torch
Upended, as my prize.

In high school I went out with girls
Who hugged, who cried, who felt, who lied
They filled in all the gaps in me
And slowly forced dependency.

I saw one girl all through college
She was my savior, mother, lover
I felt through her, she lived through me
We were a perfect pair.

I knew Jeff since we were kids
He was my partner, rival, buddy
We played cards, we drank in bars
We picked up girls and put it in 'em.
And here's our legacy:

We stayed all night at Seaside Heights
In a cottage his father owned
We were pretty fucked,
    We went down in his truck
To the beach, to the waves, to the sand.

We stumbled through pockets of
    black salty air
The sand was warm from the daytime sun
We walked in the footprints
    of the sullen, sodden businessmen and
    their sallow, sagging wives
    the teasing be-bop cheerleaders and
    punked out John Travoltas
    who were p-p-p-playing out tv
    and those warm and sensitive
        college "poets"
    their oil slick ducks
    and imagined fucks
        They'd go back home
        And write some poems
            About the things they saw.
            Ho ho.
    Children playing in the sand
    Knew more than the poets & punks
    But sure as hell weren't talking.

We bounced about in a macho twister
Tagging, tipsy ballet wrestlers
We hit the ground. We messed about.
We erased the footprints of the other poets.

His hands on my back f-f-felt so warm
His hair was smooth and flecked with sand
I could smell hot breath and sweat
I looked into his eyes

Repression, oppression, concession
We were prevented from expression

A man, it seems, is half a person
A wound up, wound up automat
Always looking for his missing half
Holistic reconcilation

Jeff saw that, too.

The strangehold became a tight embrace
The down-for-a-pin became a hug
And somewhere in all of this, a kiss.

And with a man on the beach in the sand
Anima and animus were introduced
They shook hands.

If sex is more than reproduction
Perhaps it's time for resolution
Perhaps its time to build things over
Perhaps its time for revolution

We need to think about what sex really is.
It's long past time we redefined it
Perhaps the roles, the masks, the walls
Have got to fall, have got to fall.

If we can go back to the root of it all
Gender isn't in the game
Perhaps sex is more a <u>human</u> act
Perhaps it's all the same.

We turned and walked back home
We made new footprints in the sand
And the hint, the hint, the hint of the dawn
Was creeping over the land.

Lyrics (c) Bill-Dale Marcinko & Passage
Music, 1978.

A Return to Intimacy

The sense of touch is the most powerful interpersonal sense. It establishes bonds between lovers. The presence of it can reaffrim our identity as human beings. The lack of it can make us lonely, depressed, sullen. Often the capacity to give affection through touching can make the difference to an injured person's recovery or death. Sexual behaviors are modified forms of touching, forms of touching that occur between mother and child (lovers often call each other "baby" and talk in modified baby talk-the connection is obvious).

We are given unlimited touching as babies, while in the womb and for a few years after. We are caressed, rubbed, stroked, and tickled. Then all of this touching stops. We are cut off from physical affection, so we can be "independent." We end up trying to return to intimacy the rest of our lives (we often make attempts through sex, marraige, and raising children).

Touch is a basic sense. Touch is a powerful sense. I believe that if all people who hated each other were required to hug each other for 15 second intervals, they couldn't remain enemies for 5 minutes. Because IN THAT HUG, IN THAT TOUCH, they would be forced to see how much they have in common, rather than how different they are.

Touch is a powerful communicator. It's subtle messages radiate outward and affect us sometimes without our complete knowledge.

Touch is also an undeveloped form of communication, it's vocabulary is limited. It is hardly used. How many ways are there in our society to greet someone by touching? Two? Three? What do you do if you want to express a complex emotion to someone through touching? It is hard. We have thousands of words in our vocabulary; but only a dozen or so symbolic touching unit behaviors in our physical vocabulary.

This must change.

But let me tell my story first. Two years ago, I was (like any ordinary American male) an anxious, lonely, frustrated and physically un-affectionate person, playing the typical male role of cool, detached, efficient computer. I was not allowed to feel to strongly, to cry, to fail, to be weak, to ask for help. Those things made me less of a man, you see. Most of all I couldn't be lonely. I had to be content in my solitude; tucked away in my laboratory with my test tubes or my office with my books and papers.

I asked myself: WHAT, as I have been defined, am I?

I am a person who gets nervous when people sit too close to me. I must pretend to be the aloof artist, the strong athlete, the detached academian, the powerful and all-knowing doctor, the sneaky and crafty businessmen: all roles which brought me away from people, rather than bringing me to them.

I wanted to be whole. I wanted to be a person rather than a machine. We're I to be physically affectionate, to greet people with a hug, or touch them in some unacceptable (greeting, victory, reunion, etc.are acceptable however) way to communicate my feelings, were I to try to touch them in a unique and special way I had created, I would be branded an effeminate homosexual, a weak person, a crybaby, a failure, a freak, or all of those things. But I am none of those things.

I wanted to be accepted as what I am: a person who is strong and dominant AT TIMES. A person who is aloof and detached AT TIMES. But a person who is dependent and needing to love AT TIMES. Society will not accept me that way. Men must be the rock granite agressive protectors at all times. Women must be the ineffectual, dependent, and passive non-entities, servants of the men. There is no middle ground.

I was confused. I looked for guidance from feminists and women's libbers, who talked often about abolishing the roles. I found however that they were more interested in pointing out what a horrible person I was, sexist, fascist, and the ultimate slob oppressor and general evil villain (Yes, Marilyn, Margaret, yes) than in creating a standard of humanity that was neither "super traditional male" or "super traditional female."

I realized people didn't talk about touching much, either. They talked about sex, which is infinitely easier. Touching seemed more private, more intimate, because it was simple.

AND BECAUSE IT WAS NOT AS RITUALIZED AND CONVENTIONALIZED AS SEX, and <u>THEREFORE</u>, NOT AS SAFE TO TALK ABOUT.

Touch is basic. I began to understand the tremendous self-consciousness and fear people have towards touching.

I tried to get in touch with my feelings. Slowly, painfully, I peeled off the old SAFE ways society had made me think about sex, about the need to touch. About intimacy.

Only now am I beginning to understand what it is like to be in-touch (excuse the pun) with myself. I'm still growing. Unlearning all the inadequate myths and behaviors from my parents and society takes time.

So, what is touching? Definition: A physical gesture/action which establishes a link between our bodies with another body or thing. Here I find it useful just to talk about human to human touching, although I can easily write reams on non-verbal communication, space bubbles, and substitues for intimacy (teddy bears, cigarettes, pen caps, water beds, fur coats, etc.).

The need to touch is innate and comes from our animal ancestry. If you dismiss touching as a necessary instinctual drive, then look at animals in a zoo--see how freely

a return to intimacy CONTINUED

they play with each other (especially monkeys) Us humans, however, have lost the ability to play. We walk like repelling magnets down the streets and halls, we are afraid to trust, to touch, to initiate spontaneous play.

The need to touch confirms our identities as human beings. It connects the inner world (thoughts, feelings, concepts, etc which are inside and secret) with the outer world (sensations: sight, sound, touch). It is a way of expressing these things to others. Touching establishes conditions of intimacy (condition of intimacy, definition: signals which create a contract of trust, sharing, and giving, without fear of rejection)

It is also a hell of a lot of fun; it creates a good feeling inside. Hug someone, okay: Ask them about it afterward. Almost always it makes them feel good, feel like a human being, feel warm and alive.

This is clear: WE MUST CONFIRM OUR INNER THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND IDENTITY IN SOME EXTERIOR WAY.

The best way seems to me to be through touch. Then why don't we?

Perhaps you may not be interested. Perhaps you will say that if I confront you with it. Perhaps this doesn't seem like a big issue to you. Perhaps you are so out of touch with touching, you don't even think it's important. You don't want to change.

But then again, you may have thought about it (I'm sure you have). At one time, you may have wanted to reach out and touch one of your friends (just because you want to touch them--perhaps for no other reason more complex than that), but you couldn't. You found a wall had been built up. You are frozen.

You wonder if you can be three months old again, you and your friend, for just five minutes. You want to touch, without the oppressive sexual symbolism and connotation in every gesture. You remember a time perhaps when you were greeted with a hug and kiss (by people you didn't even know), you were sat down close to them, or you were held by them. You could touch without guilt, without the sexual connotation. Running your hands over their skin, and having that pleasant sensation reciprocated. You wonder whether you can ever return to that.

Return to intimacy.

The answer (if we are to survive as human beings) must be YES.

But first, where are we now?

First of all, if we are over the age of 12, we divide up touching into two main groups: sexual and non-sexual touching. This is functional, of course, but it turns on us. We walk around in a wierd state, constantly anxious and self-conscious about "Was that hug sexual" "Is he/she making a sexual overture?" We will not allow ourselves to be children, and play together as adults. Our knowledge of sex, our sexual revolution has just made us more up-tight about sex. We are determined to read sex into everything.

This is fine, but there are greater concerns than sex: Loneliness, feeling wanted. Intimacy, feeling close. Power, control in our lives. Having a good self-image. Sex is just one way of which these BROADER HUMAN CONCERNS. Touching is a broad concern.

This priggishness over sex infects our interactions. Let's say I want to touch one of my male friends.

HUGGING: In most cases, it is only allowed as a greeting after a long absence, at a time of emotional stress, or to celebrate a sports, political or social victory. Certain groups are allowed to hug more than us normals: Athletes can hug each other, dig, because their masculinity cannot be questioned.

LINKING ARMS, ARM AROUND SHOULDER, HAND IN HAND, TOUCHING HEAD WITH HAND, HEAD TO HEAD, KISSING--All of these are not permitted among men. With the exception of ARM AROUND SHOULDER, or a HAND TO HEAD touch (only if it's violent, a slap or ruffling of hair), all of these connotate homosexuality. Why?

Males often use MOCK AGRESSION to legitimize their desire to touch each other. Where women do not have as many restrictions on touching (example: schoolgirls holding hands, kissing, etc. without sexual intent), men do. Their expressions of touching must seethe with power and violence. An 11 year old can wrestle with Dad, friends or roommates can wrestle with each other, but should the gestures become too gentle or sincere, or should they like it TOO MUCH, problems arise. Men must give the impression of aggressiveness at all costs--competitiveness towards other males at all costs.

Which brings us nicely to the section on our defenses against touching more than we do. The #1 cause, no surprise, at least among males, is...

(1) SEXUAL CONNOTATIONS OF TOUCHING: We have divided up all behaviors into acceptable "non-sexual" touching, and "sexual" touching, which is only acceptable under certain conditions. God forbid, males are seen touching each other (homosexuality), child and parent (incest), other persons of the opposite sex (adultery), or lots of people and strangers (promiscuous, or a promiscuous bisexual, even) Homosexuality is a big fear among males, although I don't know if it is a fear of sexuality PER SE, or more the fear of becoming an "effeminate" gay, the weak, powerless, limp-wristed caricature. Sexual connotations exist elsewhere, too. Between males and females, for instance. It is very to find close male-female friendships. Girls become suspicious, guys become suspicious of platonic, non-sexual touching, sure. God forbid a male should touch another female in sight of his girlfriend, or vice versa. Jealousy, plus. Ho ho.

(2) THE DESIRE TO BE 'INDEPENDENT' and 'STRONG'. Touching is equated with weakness. We are taught that solitary people who don't ask for help are good people. Hey, but no one can go their whole lives without being dependent at one time and another. No one is that perfect, or that inhuman. Look at the strong-willed and powerful businessman. You will see he has ulcers and depression--a result of denying his needs as a human being.

(3) THE INTELLECTUAL'S EXCUSE--I AM APART FROM MY BODY. MY MIND IS SUPERIOR TO MY BODY, ONLY LOWER CLASS PEOPLE CULTIVATE THEIR BODY WITH EQUAL CONCERN: The best excuse to make for being isolated and afraid of touching is to say you are an intellectual, and the real identity, the real reality is mental and verbal. You make a real effort to divide life into the two realms. You divide yourself into a "mind" and "body", as if they are two separate entities. In truth, that is nonsense. You don't HAVE a body. You ARE your body. You must be aware of it as a tool of communication. You must keep it in tune.

(4) OVERCROWDING: There are just two many people out there. I can't touch everyone. I must therefore be selective. In being selective, I touch no one. Listen: if I gave you a choice of having an overcrowded room where the crowd was friendly, responsive, and not afraid of touching you vs. a crowd which was paranoid, suspicious, and isolated, which would you rather be part of? You choose.

(5) FEAR OF REJECTION: A big worry. What if you go to touch someone and they refuse? (I generally always ask people for hugs as a rule). Okay, but if you don't take chances, you never get anything. You are only as successful as you are available. The old adage better to have and lost, then never to have had applies.

(6) FEAR OF VIOLENCE: Okay, but the same defense applies. You can take the small threat of danger and use that to turn you into a cowardly and lonely person, or you can take risks, and get the friends and love you want.

(7) THREATENS EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS: Girlfriends, wives, husbands, boyfriends--they all get jealous when they see you touching someone else. This has to do more with THEIR insecurity, negative self-image, and lack of trust and understanding in your relationship with them than your act. If you are honest with yourself and honest with them, you can't go wrong.

(8) MORE FEAR: Why are people so afraid to take risks? Why do people conform so readily? Don't they know what they are missing?

I would like to hear from all of you on this, especially those people who want to "Return to Intimacy" as I am trying to do with my friends. We can swap ideas, recipes and give each other pep talks. Maybe even share it in AFTA with others.

JANUARY 23, 1979, ENTRY 10.

A person by the name of Bobby Mason who I met on the street yesterday, invited me over to his house that night for a meeting.

It was a prayer meeting.

I have found a new source of strength in my life. Jesus Christ.

All of this time I have talked about love, and there was Jesus, who EPITOMIZED love; I knew about him; but I didn't.

Last night I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart and I was saved.

I am re-dedicating AFTA as a Christian magazine (PRAISE THE LORD! PRAISE THE LORD!) No more dirty words, no more of that evil homosexuality (rot in hell, faggots, the penalty in the Bible is death--See Leviticus) No more bad taste, no more crudity, no more controversy, no more discussion of politics or our government (BLESS THE PRESIDENT, LORD!) I have no right to criticize our politicians. It is obvious God directs their every move.

Also--another thing: I want EACH and EVERY one of YOU to be saved! I'm afraid you must profess your belief in Christ to me, or I won't be able to send you a copy of AFTA. AFTA will only go out to Christian subbers.

Bobby taught me how important it was only to have Christian friends, not to talk to or acknowledge people who aren't saved, who aren't special, and spiritual, and smart like us.

How can I describe the feeling I have now that I trust in Jesus?

All of my problems go to him. If I am unhappy, I pray to Jesus and it goes away. If I see something wrong in society, I pray for the Lord's help.

Instead of having to work and sweat and slave to make things right, I just pray to Jesus and let him do it. My life is yours, Christ. Oh, Christ.

I used to get confused about people. Now I know that people are basically evil and must be saved and cleansed of their evil nature. It says so in the Bible: "For all men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The devil is the enemy. Jesus is the ammo. No longer will I have to deal with insecurity, inadequacy, self concept, powerlessness and control, intimacy, or any of those heathen beliefs. Now I must worry about one thing: sin. Extinguish it from the Earth. Collect the sinners and turn them on to Jesus.

Here's the best high: Jesus. How simple.

DIARY ENTRIES

JANUARY 24, 1979, ENTRY 11.

Bill-Dale dialed the number of Detective Theodore Merkle.

"Ted--"

"How's it going, kid. I was just gonna call you. I got a lead. Could you come over right away?"

"Ted, I don't think I'll be needing you anymore."

"What do you mean?"

"I won't need you to find out who beat me up anymore. I've got a new sleuth in my life." Bill-Dale was radiant with joy.

"Who? Not Dave Workman?"

"No, Jesus."

"Jesus Juarez, up in Newark. That bastard. I knew that he'd--"

"No, Jesus Christ. The Lord. He's solving my cases now."

"Jesus Christ."

"Yes, Jesus. Jesus can change your life like he did to mine. Are you saved, Ted?"

"Are you crazy, Billy?"

"Ted, I'm sorry to be blunt, but you're fired. You'renot a Christian, anyway. I couldn't have you on the case if I wanted."

"Just wait a minute for you hang up on me, kid. Jesus...he's ok,he said a lotta good things, but this born again shit, it's just a cheap carny trick. You can idolize whoever you want. Like me--Marlowe, Archer, Spade... But don't get carried away. Life comes down to what you do. You divide up the world into "us" and "them." Sure it's easier that way. You don't have to think. You gotta do the leg work yourself; you can't let God and devil go at it on the sidelines, while you sit by and watch. You always said that emotional fascism was the worst kind of fascism. And you've been taken in by the pros: the Christians."

"Listen, Ted, my life is like a symphony now. Everything is beautiful. Praise God! I slaved and worked to find paradise. I wanted to find a way. I wanted to find my group--people who believed in love and magic like I did. My life is good and fine..."

"Good and fine and boring as hell. You have lost perspective, Billy."

"Jesus still loves you," Bill-Dale said lovingly.

"Not if he knew me better."

"Merkle, I've found something that works, God damn it, oh, sorry. Don't fault me for being happy."

"Okay, Billy."

JANUARY 25, 1979, ENTRY 12.

The prayer meeting was at Bobby's. Bill-Dale planned to arrive early so he and Bobby could share some scripture together. The door was unlocked, ajar, the way the Mason's liked.

"Bobby!"

He didn't come to the door, running, wearing his army jacket and horn-rimmed glasses with a chunk of masking tape in the middle where the nose bridge had broken.

"Bobby!" Bill-Dale stepped into his house. No one there. There was a Bible on the floor, literally. Someone had taken Bobby's new edition of the Modern Translation and ripped the pages out and crumpled them up. They were on the floor. Something was wrong. Who could have blasphemed so well in the living room? Not Bobby?

Bill-Dale ran down the hall to Bobby's room. He had a mock traffic sign "One Way--Jesus" on his door. The arrow had been pointed upward to Heaven. Someone had turned it around. Knock. Knock. No answer. Should he go in? Sure, what would Bobby be doing that wasn't Christian?

God. Bobby was in his room, all right. He was nailed to the upper bunk bed, nude except for his Fruit of the Loom jockey shorts. He was writhing, twisting and in pain--lots of it. The nails through his hand and feet were ripping through the bone and muscle as he tried to get down. They made a sickening grinding sound as he tried to work himself loose. Someone had stabbed him in the side with a sharpened sponge mop. There was a puddle of Bobby's blood on the floor. Blood was dripping from everywhere. He looked like a cherry popsicle, melting in the summer sun.

Bill-Dale ran over to him. How would he get him down?? Bobby suddenly heaved, gave one last sign, and said, "That's it." He was dead. But...at least he was going to heaven

Merkle came by later and took him home.

Merkle and Bill-Dale sat on the bed together. Bill said, "Merkle, I'm sorry. I want you back on the case. I don't know what came over me. Jesus ain't the answer. Maybe there ain't no such thing as answers, just lots of questions, more and more questions."

"Hey, that's my brother." Merkle hugged him. "I think this story's gonna have a happy ending after all. I think I know who beat you up, too. And you'll be surprised. One of your friends, a friend of yours for 2 years..."

"Who?" said Bill-Dale excitedly.

"Can't tell you until I'm sure. I'm gonna check on a few things tomorrow. Stop by my office about 8:00 at night. I'll have all the letters this guy wrote. He's been trying to sabotage you all along--writing letters to your friends, to other editors, trying to smear your rep."

"Okay, 8:00." Merkle turned to go. He stopped, and retraced his steps haltingly.

"Did you forget something?" Bill-Dale asked.

"No, it's just that I wanted to say something to do, Billy."

"What is it?"

"It's...nothing. Hey, you're my little brother for life, right?" Merkle looked up at him and smiled, a new face for him.

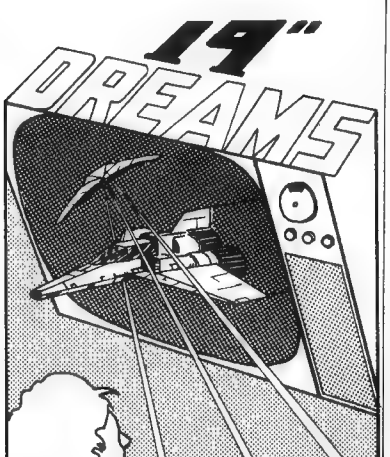
"For life, Ted."

8:00 p.m. Bill-Dale pushed open the door to Ted's office. It was open. He had a new fear of open doors, the last couple of times he went through them, he found dead bodies on the other side. This would be a nice change. Ted was a good guy. He had a warm feeling inside about him.

The office was dark. Merkle kept it that way. Ted would be sitting quietly in the corner, in an old armchair, puffing on a cigarette, his hat pulled down over his eyes, which were always open, always, even when he slept.

Bill-Dale flicked on the lights. He screamed. "FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK!"

Merkle's body lay propped up against the desk in the corner, three bullet holes in his chest. His eyes bulged out. Always open. Someone had stripped him down, just his pants, not his hat (he still had his hat) or his cigarette (which had burnt down to the filter and dropped ashes on his coat). They had cut off his cock with a knife and stuck it in his mouth. He was bleeding. Oh, God, so much blood. Bill-Dale went over to see if there had might have been some way he could have still been alive. Nothing. Bill-Dale wished then, that he had some drugs or some Jesus, or someone to hold him other than the cold, clammy, sticky body he kneeled over.



FANTASY ON TV

HOWARD THE DUCK, SUB MARINER, HUMAN TORCH pilots will be produced for CBS--no specifics yet. // NBC has aired a MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN pilot. // PLASTIC MAN and JONAH HEX may be developed. // Columbia is producing a pilot called THE COMIC BOOK COMPANY produced by Buzz Kulik and Pat Richwood written by Coslough Johnson and John Wilson, about the 'behind-the-scenes' workings of same--we'll see. For CBS. // SPIDER-MAN STRIKES BACK, the two-parter Spidey episode, is being released internationally to theatres.

AMPHIGOREV will be a syndicated animated series of Edward Gorey's fables.

BRAVE NEW WORLD, the Aldous Huxley novel adapted into a mini-series and starring Rock Hudson, will air soon, on NBC.

CHILDHOOD'S END, Universal's adaptation of Arthur C. Clarke's novel (and the most expensive tv-movie to be made) has hit a legal snag and will not make it. Clarke wants the rights optioned to theatrical producers instead.

EPCOT, Disney's new theme park, which will cost $500 million and employ 4000, will be the subject of a number of World of Disney specials.

DR. FRANKENSTEIN, a contemporary version by Arthur Fellows and Terry Keegan, is a pilot for CBS.

GNOMES, script by Ray Bradbury, based on the best-seller coffee table book, will be a two-hour animated special on CBS.

IMPULSE, is a mystery-anthology pilot for NBC, from Ben Starr and Lila Garrett Productions.

THE INSTITUTE, is a tv-pilot about an organization that investigates strange phenomena. From Alan Lansburg Prod, which does IN SEARCH OF...

LADY LIGHTNING is about a contemporary superheroine series from Lexington Broadcast Servies. The five-episode pilot will be aired in one week's daily airings or over five weeks. If successful, it will go into syndication in the Fall.

LATHE OF HEAVEN will appear on PBS in a 2-part adaptation. Adapted from the Ursula LeGuin book about a man able to create reality out of his dreams.

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE (from the C.S. Lewis novel) will be animated by Bill Melendez Productions (Peanuts), and Children's Television Workshop (Sesame Street, Electric Company).

MARTIAN CHRONICLES will appear in Fall 1979 on NBC. Richard Matheson is adapting the stories from the Ray Bradbury book. Michael Anderson is the director.

NIGHT SHIFT. Stephen King will adapt 3 of his short stories for ABC.

RELUCTANT VAMPIRE is a pilot under development about a modern-day vampire.

RETURN OF THE SAINT with Ian Oglivy has been sold to US Network.

S.H.E. is a female James Bond starring Cornelia Sharpe; Peter Hunt is director, Martin Bregman is exec. prod, Richard Maibaum is helping with the scripting. Being done in Europe for theatrical release, but CBS will televise it here.

SPACE ODDITIES, is about aliens who land in Washington, NJ instead of Washington, DC. Sounds great. Script by Dan Greenburg. *TIME TRAIN* is a train which allows you to relive a part of your life you want to chang. Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts are the producers (they produced the Logan's Run tv series).

THE WILD, WILD WEST is a tv-movie which reunites Robert Conrad and Ross Martin.

FANTASTIC FOUR CARTOON...

'Nuff said.

DR. STRANGE TV-MOVIE...

Without a doubt the most ambitious comics adaptation yet undertaken by TV has been their version of DR. STRANGE. It is an odd choice in many ways, for the supernatural has never been a strong theme in TV-- TWILIGHT ZONE and NIGHT GALLERY were the only strong-running series in that respect, and TWILIGHT ZONE often utilized more morality-plays than actual journeys into the supernatural. Like a lot of TV's ambitions, the one concerning DR. STRANGE was to a degree sincere but limited in its aim, and not just limited in terms of TV's financial bugaboos.

DR. STRANGE was a departure, resembling neither the adaptations of Spider-Man or Hulk, but falling between the utter banality of S-M and the rather-gripping rampages of Hulk. Of course STRANGE has potential to be better than either, but the opening pilot shows a few characteristic deficiencies we've all become too familiar with.

First, the belief that a superhero must be identified with a gimmick or gimmicks-- HULK's strength is the least gimmicky of features, but the others are practically the sum and total of the characters. BATMAN is his Bat-gadgetry, SPIDEY is his webs and wallcrawling, and now, DR. STRANGE is weird hand-lightnings and dimensional journeys.

Like a lot of TV's 2-hour features, the plot is considerably stretched, and more than a little dependent on John Dykstra's special effects. The basic plot-thread concerns the attempt of Lindmer (John Mills), a surrogate for the Ancient One, to find a disciple to take on the mystical task of defending Earth against supernatural evil. Stephen Strange proves to be this disciple, but also becomes the focus for a sort of fairy-tale conflict between a good female (Clea, who is mortal here) and an evil sorceress (Morgan Le Fay, a "Dark Queen" who is also Kali, Ishtar, and Lilith, by some ledgerdemain). Morgan, under the command of a phony-looking dimensional entity, travels from a weird netherworld to try killing Lindmer before he can pass on his powers. This she does by taking control of Clea as a pawn, and though Lindmer is not killed, Clea comes in handy later to lure Stephen Strange into Morgan's, ah, clutches. It is a rather rudimentary version of the original DR. STRANGE fairly stimulating but not as mind-boggling as either the comics version or a good segment of NIGHT GALLERY.

Special effects, alas, do not consistently capture the aura of the supernatural. In one instance the program tries to reproduce the sort of Ditkoesque portrait of a weird island in dimensional space, but instead it just looks like a mock-up. Transition scenes into other dimensions remind one of STAR WARS' hyperspace journey, as Lindmer's magic sometimes reminds one of Obi-Wan's Force-manipulations. Only the bolts of occult lightning which various characters employ are really strikingly original effects.

Finally, the characters are more than a little half-baked. Jessica Walter makes a mediocre Dark Queen, while Clea is a rather lacklustre college student. Wong makes an appearance, not as a humble Oriental servant, but as a conservatively-dressed disciple of Lindmer, depressingly unmysterious. John Mills comes off as a well-acted if poorly-conceived imitation of Obi-Wan, even down to the hooded robe they both wear (Alec Guinees, however, has the edge on Mills, if only because Guiness has the more impressive facial contour, able to hint at humor or tragedy with an easy flair.) Finally, it's hard to judge Peter Hooten's acting as Dr. Strange, since in this episode he spends most of the time playing a bewildered intern (none of that original concept about the worldly man who sinks into selfish pity before advancing into wizardry). Much would have been gained had the producers not led off with a kind of good vs. evil, supernatural STAR WARS, but with the kind of visionary mysteries that the comic series began with. There, the first impression was of Strange's mystery-man status, before being acquainted with his mundane origins. Unfortunately, TV cannot stand the idea of a hero whose character is not totally comprehensible, and so loses the vast power of suggestiveness in such a character.

If DR. STRANGE did make it as a series, some of the old hands from NIGHT GALLERY might still be around for it.

--Gene Phillips

BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA...

TV leads to death

DELRAN (UPI) — A 13-year-old boy died of suffocation by putting a plastic bag over his head to imitate a television space hero, authorities said Thursday.

Gary J Haller of Delran was found dead in front of the television set by his parents when they returned home Sunday night. The plastic bag was on his head.

The boy was watching the TV show "Battlestar Galactica," in which the character Cylon Warrior wears a plastic helmet.

Police said they believed the boy was trying to imitate what he saw on the show. The Burlington County medical examiner listed the death as accidental. The coroner's report said the boy died from inhaling his own carbon dioxide inside the plastic bag.

Boring as hell, after a few weeks the special effects cannot help me from dozing off. This year I have fallen asleep 5 times during Battlestar: Galactica (beating my previous record of 4 times during FAMILY, another real dozer). Am I supposed to like this fodder? Can't muster the energy to review it, so others will. Plots--repetitious, characterizations--muddy, special effects are neat, but how many times can you see a fighter explode? Lorne Greene has got some severe trouble, slobbering, lumbering around (I suspect hemorrhoids). Am I getting old? Or jaded? --Bill-Dale Marcinko

On the whole, I've been pleased. One can really fly high on the special fx. I guess I'm happy to see a full-blown SF show being popular and on TV. The show does show promise, and I'm fascinated by the concept.

The show's concept must be judged according to its merit, and then you ask the question of the show, "Did it develop to its potential?" I'm tried of hearing people compare B:G to Star Wars. Star Wars concept was shallow, but it succeeded as a fun, enjoyable film. B:G has a wonderful concept, but hasn't lived up to its potential. Star Trek was fairly successful on both counts.

To my knowledge there is no other story with the concept set forth in B:G, of mankind's brother's fighting to reach us. This is one of the high points of B:G. The show was started on an epic scale and I felt along with the Colonials as their world and their lives were destroyed.

Star Trek worked because of the format. The show had, built into it, a perfect device to wander around the galaxy and get involved in many different plotlines. I felt B:G had the same opportunity. However, so far the shows have all dealt with a battle between the Colonials and Cylons. The Klingons weren't in every episode of Star Trek. There was one notable exception, when Apollo, being the good hero that he is, discovers that a planetary opportunist has been exploiting people by using a "broken" Cylon as a fear-inspiring motivation. That show worked partially because it was refreshing, and partially because we were moved by Apollo's relationship with a family he meets on the surface. B:G might succeed with this repetition, as did The Fugitive and The Immortal, if it were crafted a bit better.

We all have enjoyed the games built into the show, such as feldercarb, Pyramid, and daggits. And, while this show is basically done for fun, it can be intellectual at times. Think of the show that could be done as an epilogue to the show. Social comment could be made about Earth and our society when and if the Colonials arrive on Earth. It would not be all that their myths and legends held it to be.

--Mark Collier

I like this show with about ten zillion reservations. Simple-minded space opera, of course with sometimes appalling lacks in logic and very derivative names (Apollo Adama, etc. To say nothing of the names of the original colonies, which seem to be Taurus, Aries, and all the sun-signs in the earthly zodiac.)

I also wish that idiotic kid who gets into the stupidest situations, and his robot-dog-bear-whatsis would get CREAMED by the Cylons!

I also hope Battlestar never finds the "long-lost colony, Earth". We've troubles enough...(although they could do a show in which the Galactica DOES find Earth, but finally concludes that it's all a Cylon trick, a world inhabited by illogical androids, running a mad planet...)

I would rank it between LOST IN SPACE (which I hated) and STAR WARS (which I loved). Special effects or no, it needs much better scripters and plotters before it'll be up to Star Trek's standards--which of course fell considerably short of adult science fiction.

--Al Schroeder III

It exists on several levels: the special-effects, agreed to be excellent. The general Cylon-following level plots, of variable quality. But what is most significant is the very strong infusion of religion and religious symbolism into the stories.

The scenes with the pyramids on Cobol, and in the chamber with the triangle of light stand out as the strongest symbols. The Egyptian helmets of the pilots, the jewelry worn by Adama and others, plus numerous other materials, actions, and suggestions show that the writers are trying to unite science and religion within the framework of science fiction. *(Or aren't bright enough to create original symbolism, and are turning to diluted versions of common religions' mythology. --Bill-Dale)*

Whether you like or hate B.G., I believe you will have to admit that trying to tie in science and religion openly is a bold step in programming. The science/religion split goes back at a minimum to Bruno and Galileo; on another level it goes as far back as Babylon and Ancient Egypt. The break opened wider with Darwin's misunderstood work, and in the end resulted in fields of knowledge --science, religion, philsophy, wicca-- created totally separate from each other, and at eternal war with each other.

This is extremely unfortunate, as all four areas have good and bad points, and by combining the best of all four areas we can probably come up with a sound philosophy for our own daily lives, without much extreme effort.

--Jim Crawford

The New Avengers

The first show was EXCELLENT, a typically nutty bit worthy of the old Avengers at their height. But since then: every show I've seen is a variant of an old theme: foreign agents find a mysterious agent/poison/device that can kill British Secret Service agents tracelessly. Very repetitious and very dull. The Old Avengers had quite a few klunkers, but at least they varied the plots a bit. Steed is now more of a senior agent--logical; he is played well, with a hint of the old charm. Purdy is less successful--definitely better than Tara King, but she suffers comparison with Mrs. Peel. Gambit I like much more than Purdy--somewhat rougueish, witty, occasionally sarcastic and quite charming. The best innovation of the new show.
--Al Schroeder III

Gambit investigates the strange device which is causing Secret Service agents to act strangely, while Steed looks on. From the episode entitled "Bong."

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There were two seasons of The New Avengers produced in England, 13 shows in each season. They are being show here NOT in the original broadcast order. The dates and order given here are air dates on CBS in New York, for all 1978 shows. Those from the second season are followed by (2nd), w=Writer, d=Director.

Produced by Albert Fennell and Brian Clemens.
Music by Laurie Johnson
CAST: John Steed.....Patrick Macnee
Purdey.....Joanna Lumley
Mike Gambit.....Gareth Hunt

#1: "The Eagle's Nest" (9/15/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Desmond Davis
A cult of surviving Nazis kidnap a British scientist to revive the body of Adolf Hitler. Von Claus: Peter Cushing, Stannard: Brian Anthony, Father Trasker, Main: Neil Phillips

#2: "Target" (9/22/78)
w: Dennis Spooner d: Ray Austin
Five intelligence agents all die after practicing on the same firing range. Draker: Keith Baron, Bradshaw: Roy Boyd, Klokoe: Deep Roy, Ilenko: Robert Beatty.

#3: "Angels of Death" (9/29/78) (2nd)
w: Terence Feely & Clemens d: Ernest Day
Certain security agents are having the wrong results from going to a health spa--specifically, death. Coldstream: Dinsdale Landon; Manderson: Terence Alexander, Tammy: Caroline Munro.

#4: "Sleeper" (10/6/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Graeme Gordon
Bank robbers are using a special gas to put the people of London to sleep while they pull of their jobs. Brady: Keith Buckley, Tina: Sara Kestelman, Chuck: Mark Jones, Bart: Prentis Hancock.

#5: "Faces" (10/13/78)
w: Brian Clemens & Dennis Spooner d: James Hill...Government officials are being killed and replaced by exact doubles, trained to relay all top secret material to their superiors. Prator: David de Keysey, Mullins: Edward Petherbridge, Clifford: Neil Halett.

#6: "House of Cards" (10/20/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Ray Austin
A Russian agent executes his master plan to kill Steed, Purdey, and Gambit because they stopped him from capturing a scientist. Perov: Peter Jaffrey, Olga: Ina Skriver, Prof. Vassil: Gordon Sterne.

#7: "Forward Base" (11/3/78) (2nd)
w: Dennis Spooner d: Don Thompson
Russia has built a new missile base under Lake Ontario, and just may blow up most of North America. Hosking: Jack Creley, Bailey: August Schellenberg, Ranoff: Marilyn Lightstone, Malachev: Nick Nichols.

#8: "Obsession" (11/10/78) (2nd)
w: Brian Clemens d: Ernest Day
Purdey's old boyfriend is mixed up in a plot to destroy the British Parliament. Larry; Martin Shaw, General Canvey: Mark Kingston, Cmdr. East: Terence Lowden, Kilner: Louis Collins, Morgan: Anthony Heaton.

#9: "Cat Amongst the Pigeons" (11/17/78)
w: Dennis Spooner d: John Hough.
A bird fanatic has trained his precious pets to spy, steal, and kill on command. Zacardi: Valdek Sheybal, Turner: Matt Long, Lewington: Hugh Walters, Waterlow: Peter Copely, Rydercroft: Basil Dignam.

#10: "Dead Men Are Dangerous" (11/24/78)(2nd)
w: Brian Clemens d: Sidney Hayers.
Mark Crater, the man who Steed always beat in college sporting events, begins destroying everything Steed cares for as revenge. Mark: Clive Revill, Perry: Richard Murdoch.

#11: "The Midas Touch" (12/1/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Robert Fuest.
A gold-hungry professor is ecstatic when he finds a young man whose touch kills. He threatens to kill a princess unless he's paid. Prof. Turner: David Swift, Midas: Giles Millinaire, Freddy: John Carson, Vann: Edward Deveraux, Hong Kong Harry: Ronald Lacey.

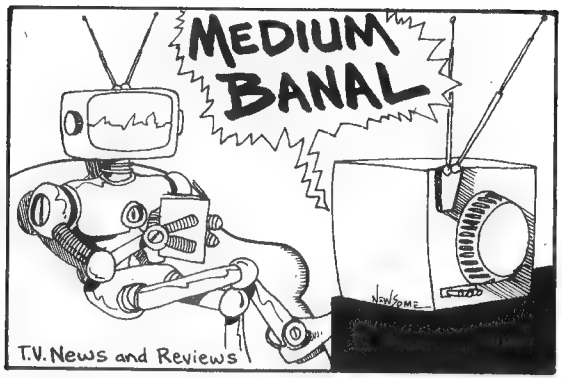
#12: "Hostage" (12/8/78) (2nd)
w: Brian Clemens d: Sidney Hayers
Purdey is kidnapped by terrorists who demand that Steed steal all sorts of top secret documents for them. McKay: William Franklyn, Spelman: Simon Oates, Walters: Michael Culver, Suzy: Anna Palk.

#13: "The Lion and the Unicorn" (12/15/78)
w: John Goldsmith d: Ray Austin. (2nd)
Steed & Co. must find the Unicorn, a Parisian spy, and then use him to uncover an evil alliance of French agents. The Unicorn: Jean Claudio, LeParge: Maurice Marsac, Ritter: Jacques Morie, Minister: Gerald Sim.

#14: "Dirtier by the Dozen" (12/22/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Sidney Hayers
A British army division has been hiring themselves out to revolutionaries around the world in need of military help. Col. Miller: John Castle, Sgt. Bowden: Sean Curry, Travis: Colin Skeaping, General Stevens: Michael Barrington, Tony Noble: Michael Howarth.

#15: "Gnaws" (12/29/78)
w: Brian Clemens d: Ray Austin
A giant rat, spawned by radioactivity, has eaten all of the animals in the sewers, and is now coming up through manhole covers to try a new delicacy: human flesh. Thornton: Julian Holloway, Walters: Morgan Sheppard, Carter: Peter Collier.

--compiled by Jack Seabrook



Why is the quality of tv so poor? And why is it getting worse? Since most television (with the exception of public tv) must sell commercial air time to sponsors, they must guarantee (1) that the commercial will reach the widest number of people (2) that the program the commercial is shown with put the viewer in a receptive and positive mood (which is then interrupted by the commercial)

The end result? Sure-risk programming. Networks will not take risks with anything too new, original, or controversial. All three networks refused to air Monty Python and Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, for instance. Networks fear alienating the sponsors (and therefore your source of income) through either getting poor ratings, offending the sponsor, or offending the audience--shaking them up and making them think so they won't be in a passive, blissful mood. Tv makes you passive. It must be bland so that the commercial stands out even more.

Add to this the break-neck time it takes to produce a program, increasing costs of production (due mostly to the actor's salary) and what do you have?

LCD tv. Lowest common denominator. In basic math, to add two odd fractions you must find the lowest number that both will divide evenly into. So it is with tv. A program must capture the greatest number of viewers by alienating the least number. Tv is concerned not with most memorable tv but least offensive tv.

Commercial tv in 1979 is a wasteland. Tv is the most powerful medium on this planet, but it is also the least developed, most juvenile, and of the poorest quality. Networks fear of taking chances destroys all imagination, creativity, and originality. We get endless spin-offs, sequels, adaptations, adaptations of adaptations.

So what do we do? Do we write letters to the networks? Perhaps, but one crazy letter from a parent in Iowa raving about sex on tv will cancel out 100 of ours. None of the traditional methods work. The only action now is a complete destruction of the current system of production, network commercial tv broadcast via antenna. Alternatives?

LOCAL TV

Doing a program at a local studio for local broadcast would circumvent the machinations of the networks. Programming could be geared to a specific audience--they could determine how sophisticated and "adult" a program would be. These decisions, like rulings on porno, would be made by local communities. This is good. However, most local tv tends not to be original comedy, drama, music, but rather inane public affairs (news, political talks, a look at 'local' people). Strange things can happen--so hunt down your local tv programs. For instance, Channel 68 in East Orange, NJ has got Floyd Vivino, who hosts a strange children's show ("Uncle Floyd") which absolutely defies description. Comes off as a kid's show and satire of same. If you live in the area, you must see it. 5:30 Monday-Friday, Channel 68. There are gems like this to be found all over, if you look for them.

FOURTH NETWORK

This phrase was coined a few years back by Norman Lear. His TAT Communications company bypassed the network system entirely and sold his shows (MARY HARTMAN, ALL THAT GLITTERS, FERNWOOD FOREVER, FERNWOOD/AMERICA 2-NIGHT) directly to the independent stations, most of them being non-network affiliates (the stations that broadcast old movies and loops of I Love Lucy reruns). Although this alternative looked bright, nothing much happened outside of TAT. Since America 2-Night was cancelled amidst bad ratings, the products since then have been forgettable and often embarassing (Please Stand By, The Cheap Show, Hee Haw). There is great potential here, because you can avoid network pressure and censorship. You can produce potential high quality tv. No one has. For awhile Operation Prime Time looked bright (remember when it was supposed to produce new movies preceded by the new Star Trek episodes on Sat. night?). The products now are mostly low-grade "novels for television" like The Bastard. For the most part, carbon copies of the network attempts at same. Oh, well.

CABLE TV

For the most part, cable tv companies simply broadcast local tv stations (that you would not be able to get even with a good antenna). Cable tv in New Jersey for instance, brings in all the New York and Philadelphia channels with crystal sharp reception. Most cable tv stations leave an open air station or two on their converter. These can (best example here is New York's Channel 6) be used for original programming, broadcast from the studio and into the cable. Available only to subscribers. Home Box Office offers uncut, commercial free theatrical movies a few months after release for a fee ($7.50-$15.00 per month). HBO has been running original concerts and sporting events also. Tv may soon be all pay-tv, broadcasting commercial free programs designed specifically for the cable audience. For example, the newly formed Rutgers student tv station (Knight Time Productions) is planning to broadcast their programming through a cable access channel. In 5 years, we plan to hook up to other cable units, achieving state-wide distribution. (By the way, I should be doing a number of shows through Knight Time, if you're interested--a few dramas and HELLO, REALITY, a morning talk show satire that's been looking for a home).

VIDEO TAPE

Video tape can frustrate the networks crazy scheduling by recording two programs simultaneously, while you're out, or record programs for later playback minus commercials. Video tape also gives the person the ability to buy prerecorded video tapes without commercials.

VIDEO DISCS

May be the most exciting thing since color tv. There is a question in the industry as to which form, tape or disc, will win out. The video tape is wide magnetic tape, like a cassette. The video disc looks like a record and is 'played' like a record, scanned by an optical laser beam. In 5 or 10 years, we'll probably see an integration of both methods, like stereos today offer records and tape units. The video disc, like the video tape is a tremendous break through, because the discs can be sold like record albums. High quality, no commercials, no censorship. Initially, the discs will be already established movie hits and tv hits (Jaws, Animal House, Duel, Roots, I Love Lucy, etc.) There will come a time when original material is produced SPECIFICALLY for the video disc. This week's VARIETY had some thrilling news: The test marketing by RCA in Atlanta of the video disc player went over tremendously well, most stores selling out right away. One owner said the response was 10 times what he expected. Because of that, RCA will start marketing it next year, with a price 'under $400.' They will have a minimum of 250 titles in their software catalog, selling for the price of a record album. Most movies will fit on one disc (1 hour per side). The discs are incredibly cheap to produce, hard to pirate illegal copies of, and the minimum pressing of any disc can be small and still return the money. This means, small special films which don't have broad audience appeal can be released, like record albums, opening up a whole new area of entertainment, and production. (Note--all of you who want to be film directors and actors turn your heads away from the silver screen and look to the vid disc for opportunities). The discs are of a better quality than the video tape (sound quality, especially)--they look like the New Wave of tv in the 1980's. I will report developments here in AFTA. Any news, clippings, or information would be helpful.

On another front, there is a movement afoot to ban tv commercials from children's programming. The argument is that young children cannot distinguish between program and commercial. They are unaware of the purpose of the commercial and their freedom to disregard it. I support this movement completely, and encourage you to write to the FCC and the networks and express your opinion also.

A number of people have suggested the initiation of a tv ratings system, like those used for movies (G, PG, R, X) to better inform parents of the content of a program. Although impossible to enforce ("You are not admitted to the living room without an accompanying parent or guardian"), it beats the hell out of those "parental discretion advised" warnings, and just may free up regulations and stop those fundamentalist asshole lobby groups from exerting undue pressure on the networks. Again, write letters to the FCC and the networks, or send the letters to me, and I'll send them along.

A sincere round of applause goes to West Germany, who banned tv one day a week so that the families there could sit down and talk to each other, do other things together. Although I doubt such sensibility would ever come to the front here in America, it is still an intriguing idea. Perhaps for those of you out there who are tv junkies, or live in a family which uses the tv to babysit for the kids, you could make a resolution for 1979 to turn off the tv one night (or even 2, 3, 4 nights) a week and just sit and entertain each other with conversation, jokes, songs, and entertainment that is NOT coming out of the box. The worst thing you can happen is an increase in intelligence and sensitivity.

TV AS ALTER-NATE REALITY

In the January 20 Tv Guide, Benjamin Stein comments that the world of television is 'clean, full of happy endings and active people' and that the programs you see on tv reflect the lives which the producers and writers lead in Los Angeles. "It is L.A. they are broadcasting around the world as the model enviroment. The faces, clothes, haircuts and cars of people on television are those of the people walking down Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills."

Television creates an "alternate" reality for us. Stein suggests some of the ways: On The Waltons, we are supposed to believe we are in a Depression-era farming town in backwoods Virginia. Anyone who has been to a backwoods farming town in the South, knows that they are invariably dirty and bedraggled. On The Waltons, even the barnyard is immaculate. Marie Antoinette could not have asked for more agreeable quarters. The grittiest tv show was generally believed to be Baretta. Even there, the supposedly shabby boarding houses are neat, bright, and cheery. Even the junkies wear fresh clothing and sport recent haircuts."

"Every problem that comes up on tv is cured before the show is over. No one suffers from existential terrors. People get things done. No one spends all day in a windowless office going over musty volumes of figures and regulations. No one on television spends all day in bed, too lethargic or depressed to get up. There is no such thing as depression on tv. Everyone, good or bad is charged with energy."

"People in tv think big. They think about making a million selling heroin, or about ridding LA of the most vicious killer of the decade. In a comedy, a poor family thinks of getting rich. A middle-class family thinks of getting into the upper class. A black family thinks of overcoming racism."

I would like to elaborate. By the dramatic structure and organization of tv, 10 minutes then commercial, 5 minutes then commercial, commercial, commercial, commercial, time is telescoped into little segments. People are taught to think fast. Don't be dedicated or interested too long, utopia comes fast. Divide your attention into 3 minute spans because a commercial is coming up.

A number of kindergarten teachers are complaining about what I call "the Sesame Street Syndrome" Many of the Sesame Street/ Electric Company reading-taught, tv-suckled generation is going to school. Teachers are reporting students attention span is short because the teacher cannot come near the speed or color of Sesame Street in her methods. The kids want teachers to explode into sound and color 5-5-5-5-5-5-5-5-5-5-5 like their tv sets did when they were younger. They can't.

What happens after continual tv viewing? What happens when the underlying philosophy of tv begins to sink in (and don't say you are not affected--you are and you know it). We see the world as the tv world, we accept THAT as reality. The tv world is simplistic, mindlessly optimistic, shallow, and fast. People there never get depressed, never think or puzzle over things for long periods of time, never worry about sex (in fact they rarely have sex, OR fall in love, real love) With this vision of the tv reality tucked in the back of our minds, we go out into the "real" world, and try to live. We become frustrated, apathetic, frightened, because this world doesn't match up to the safe, ordered life we lead. We find real life requires patience, constant involvement, getting tired, depressed, hard work, pain, sweat, and frustration.

So what do we do? We retreat to our tv world, leaving the real business of life behind. We don't vote, we don't get socially involved, we don't have as many friends as we could/should.

Things get worse. We get depressed, SOOO... We watch more tv. What better reassurance it is, if you are poor and sick and depressed and insecure to retreat to the simplistic world of tv--where there is no dirt, no emotional risks, no real struggle.

I want to tell you a story about my present roommate at college. This is not intended as a proof positive of anything, just a story. My roommate watches a lot of television--not good television, but indiscriminate watching--whatever's on. He said he grew up with it--his parents used it to babysit with him. He uses the tv set as an alarm in the morning (a timer connected to the tv turns on Farm Report or the Today show). He will watch tv from his bed until 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon. At which time he gets out of bed, showers, goes to class (after having missed a number of classes in the morning), eats dinner. He is back in front of the tv set at 6:00 for the news, and watches through until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning when the CBS Late Movie ends. We can assume, then, by that extended viewing, his greatest source of information and pleasure is from television (if it isn't the question is then, why watch it?). I often wonder how he would react if I hid his tv. Would he fly into a panic, like a baby separated from a pacifier?

Talking to him (when he's not watching tv) is a frustrating experience. He sees things in terms of black and white, right and wrong, moral and immoral, loyal friend or loathsome enemy. He seems a tad bit more paranoid than I (and I surely must be the king). He belongs to a rifle drill team. He is interested in the military. He went to high school in a private Catholic all-male school.

If he has highs and lows emotionally, I have yet to see them. His life is simple. Ordered. His relationships with people are easily defined and understood. He is highly analytical, highly critical. There is tnohing about him he wants to change. He is for all intents and purposes, perfect. Right. Inpenetrable. Rigid.

In this way, he is almost kind of an allegory.

Why do people watch tv? It is safe, easy. Convenient.

Thinking of him reminds me of Doris Lessings' line about this kind of simplistic rationalism. Describing one of her characters lives, she laments...

In all of this, however, there must be expected a certain flatness...

A certain flatness.

Flatness--the total rationality, the complete certainty of existence. Life is certainly wild, unpredictable, changeable. I find it unhealthy to think of it otherwise.

Why do people watch tv? It is safe. Easy. Convenient.

What kind of world is presented on tv? Safe. Easy. Convenient.

Why do people watch tv? It is safe. Easy. Convenient.

It goes on.

SEX

Sex is portrayed on television today as an adolescent sex fantasy. Simplistic, shallow, plastic. Not unlike the sexual character of a 10 or 11 year old. Pretty hair. Obvious breasts. More subtle clues were beyond comprehension in the days of pre-actual sexual experience. Look at the standards of beauty and the shows which foster tehm: AMERICAN GIRLS, CHARLIE'S ANGELS, THREE'S COMPANY, and the most offensive show of the year, FLYING HIGH. Sex is titillation, dirty jokes, inflatable bodies with billowing hair. The expression on the face is vacuous and vacant--without emotion. Blow-up dolls, giggling and jiggling through airplanes.

Something, however, is wrong.

It leaves out a whole range of experience. Sex on tv is cheap jokes--sex is never seen as a mature way of communicating--it is seen only as a cheap thrill. Sex is never seen as complex or embodying any emotional or philosophical dynamics. Sex is never seen as disappointing. No one gets upset or anxious about sex, no one is ever rejected--or if they are, it is done in the context of a punchline. The sex act is rarely presented in any holistic fashion. A giggling, cheap, adolescent attitude permeates everything.

VIOLENCE

The key to dangers of violence rests not in HOW MUCH violence is portrayed on the tv tube, but the character of the violence presented. Violence can be portrayed in two ways.

(1) REALISTICALLY--showing the effects and connotations of the violent act with detail and realism. i.e. TAXI DRIVER

(2) STYLISTICALLY--subverting the violence so that it loses its impact. i.e. ROCKY HORROR, THE FURY (which is one of the least-dangerous violent films of 1978, because the violence exists in another world, in a context which renders it harmless)

Violence should be allowed on tv to the extent the work allows. To avoid violence (The Family Hour) is just as bad as exploiting violence, because you draw attention to it. Violence must work within the fabric in the story, not be a character in itself. I don't think there is much validity to preventing violence to protect us from unstable people who mimic it (e.g. the Born Innocent case)

Violence, however, on tv, is dangerous. Because it is neither realistic or stylistic. The violence on tv is bland, matter-of-fact, cleaning up the realism. Violence becomes BLAND. It doesn't hurt. When is the last time you saw someone writhing in pain from getting a bullet in their gut. (You know, it DOES hurt). People want violence: Clean, Neat. But that is where the danger lies. Since many people think violence is such a casual occurance, so commonplace, they become immune to it--it has lost its seriousness. People don't want to get emotionally involved.

How can you present a violent act and not show the pain? I'm not saying all violence should be presented as dirty and gritty. The work should determine it. In James Bond or Rocky Horror, or comedy shows, there is violence, but we know we are in a fantasy world, and that we aren't allowed to compare it to our real one. We will never be a secret agent, We will never be Dr. Frank 'n' Furter. The portrayal of violence MUST fit the tone of the situation.

SIMPLY BLAH

Most tv series and movies this season were frighteningly forgettable for just plain bad. We had a slew of 'novels for tv', sweeping across the days of the week. These TV EVENTS aren't much better than soap operas. They are just soap operas with class--lots of nice locations, big has-been stars, lots of illusions that something is going on as family follows family. Nothing, in fact, is.

Aside from a few interesting theatrical premieres, most editted with a complete lack of respect for the work (I just finished watching EXCERPTS FROM TAXI DRIVER and still have nightmares about CARRIE (I didn't know John Travolta was a stupid "jerk" Thought he was something else)), most television was highly unwatchable. Great year for reading and going to movies and concerts. Tv--nah.

The new series. PEOPLE...a mawkish, exploitative, offensive, idiotic show with Phyllis George as hostess. Her tactlessness (I had to watch 5 hours of Dick Cavett just to recover) is dwarfed only by the almost pornographic way this show nosed into the lives of famous stars (the segments themselves were typically shallow and simplistic in the PEOPLE magazine style). GRANDPA GOES TO WASHINGTON...Jack Albertson hobbling around with his quaint wit and Sam Ervin style enthusiasm. Is this what post-Watergate has given us for heroism? Grandpa and Jimmy Carter? EDDIE CAPRA MYSTERIES...Done sooooo much better with Ellery Queen. A sad, bad carbon copy of EQ. W.E.B...Trite soap opera, they led us to believe that this was something by mentioning NETWORK. No comparison. SWORD OF JUSTICE...No imaginative or interesting characters, plots, dialogue. Great to go to sleep to. NEXT STEP BEYOND... A show with one plot, reused again and again. Person gets psychic precognitive message, later proven to be genuine. ZZZZZZZ. MARY... Great concept, marred only by the fact that the cast has no talent (Mary, can you sing, can you dance? No, no, no) Mary looks butch

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

"I'm Not In Love" is about the inability to fall in love: "I understand what you say/ But I'm in love/What does it take to fall in love/Do people really fall in love?...Take it easy/Don't let your feelings get in the way." Love, in TH's world, is only possible in an extremely pragmatic sense.

Emotions are mechanical. Our feelings are rooted in behaviorism (Skinner said all emotions and thoughts are conditioned by the enviroment, and learned). "Move a muscle/Make emotion/Pull it tighter" Byrne says in "Stay Hungry."

The most powerful song on the album is "The Big Country", a reductive song about Suburbia. I love the album covers on MORE SONGS: the front is a composite photograph of individual Polaroid shots, the back is an infrared map which reduces the whole US to a series of colored areas--Byrne's vision is fragmented, mechanical, and reductive. It leaves no place for spontaneity and fun. No where is this indictment as clear as on "The Big Country":

"I see the shapes I remember from maps/ I see the shoreline/I see the white clouds/ Baseball diamond/Nice weather down there" He tells us, too, he has 'learned to look at these things' and understands 'how these things work together.' The way they work is extremely mechanical and reductive. His world is one where struggle and emotion are gone. What is left is simply shapes on maps, and distance. "I guess it's healthy/I guess the air is clean/I guess those people have fun with their neighbors and friends/Look at the kitchen/And all of that food/I look at them eating/I guess it tastes real good/They grow it in the farmlands/Then they bring it to the stores/They put in in the car trunk/ And they bring it back home." It's all that simple.

His verdict on that life: "I wouldn't live there if you paid me to." But still... he's distanced himself in his perspective. He still wants to feel, to belong. "I'm talking of looking out the window of the airplane/I'm tired of travelling/I want to be somewhere" BUT... "It's not even worth talking about those people down there." The song and album ends in a regression to baby talk: "Goo goo ga ga ga/Goo goo ga ga ga."

--Bill-Dale Marcinko

DIARY ENTRIES

JANUARY 27, 1979, ENTRY 15.

Billy cried at Merkle's funeral. He and the gravedigger were the only mourners. He vowed to get the killer. The police had no clues--no clues to anything. Sanderson, Bobby Mason, or Ted. The bodies were piling up rapidly and Bill-Dale was the link to the killings. Would he be next? Who was doing this? He was the only common link. It was almost as if God (or some horrible alter-ego) was trying to wear him down.

A large man in grey suit was walking towards Bill-Dale. He emerged from a limo parked on the grass of the cemetary. His face seemed familiar, pictures in the newspaper, perhaps? He was coming closer...

"My name is Rupert Peach. I am aware that you have turned down my offers thus far, but I thought I would come to visit you one last time to see if you might reconsider..."

"I'll take it," Bill-Dale spat out.

"You'll what?" The fat man's face molded itself into a question mark.

"I'll take your God-damned money." Bill-Dale looked down as they shoveled dirt on top of him.

"Ah, my lad, 'tis much more than that. It is spiritual guidance, protection, strength, you would like to be protected, wouldn't you?" Peach's voice was deep and soothing. It made Bill-Dale feel like he was being wrapped in a warm blanket.

"What do I have to do?" Bill-Dale said.

"Well... Billy, may I call you Billy? I like that name, Billy, very warm, warm and friendly, don't you think? Appropriate for close friends like us?"

Bill-Dale's first impulse was to shout, "Don't call me that, you fat pig" but the voice was so smooth, so warm and drawling that Bill-Dale just mumbled "warm, warm" softly to himself.

"I would like you to meet me at my office," Peach continued. "It's on the 18th floor of the Cervox Building on Park Avenue. You have an appointment at 10:00 tomorrow morning. A limosine will pick you up at college at 9:00. Do you understand?"

"Why me? How do I fit in with the scum you got on your rolls?"

"Now, Billy, is that anyway to talk to a friend. I like you, it is as simple as that. I have money, so I can afford to do what I like. I think you can be a really fine editor. Plus, I'm the person to give you the power and success you've always wanted," Peach said.

"I don't want success." That was a lie, Bill-Dale.

"Yes, you do. Just think about it--you will have the opportunity to do whatever you want with AFTA. You will never have to worry about money again. You will have the audience you've always wanted. I really liked it when you called AFTA a fanzine of love. I'm just asking you to spread that love around to more people. Is that wrong?"

JANUARY 28, 1979, ENTRY 16.

The Cervox Building is all exteriors. An illusion of importance is created--People pretend to carry out helpful and serious tasks. At the base of it, few significant things occur.

Rupert Peach sat in his office, leaning back in his apolstered chair, gazing out at the Manhattan skyline.

"You probably own most of that, don't you?", Bill-Dale said as he walked in the door.

"Oh, you're here! Now, Billy, there is something I have to talk to you about. Your future. You won't need to go to college anymore--that is simply a distraction. You will be getting a salary from me. I would like you to edit a new magazine of mine called EVERYONE ALIVE--it will be about people. You have such a rapport with people- I think we can market that..."

"Wait, just a minute. First, the deal was for AFTA, not this EVERYONE ALIVE crap..."

"Okay, Billy, I'll make a concession. I will give you money to print AFTA #3, since it is already done. It will be enough to satisfy your present following, in that so called 'fandom' group of yours, before you move on. Next issue we change AFTA's name to EVERYONE ALIVE. We begin with a photo story on you--Bill-Dale Marcinko, rags to riches, the new breed of editor: young, energetic, caring. We can use the media to..."

"Listen, Peach, I'm getting out of here. I don't want any of that. You can take your money and shove it. You can't sell me like cereal. I'm a human being. I'll pay for the limo. Just open...this...door!" Bill-Dale pounded on the door to Peach's office, which was thick, padded, no doubt soundproof.

"I'm tired of your veneer of kindness, too. Your sickly smile--your warmth is an illusion just like all of this is!" Bill-Dale was shouting, crying.

"Now, Billy, we wouldn't want what happened to your dear friends Eric, Bobby, and Ted to happen to you. Or maybe to your parents..." Peach smiled.

"YOU! YOU KILLED THEM! YOU MOTHERFUCKER! IT WAS YOU! LET ME OUTTA HERE!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that. When I want something, I get it. And I think you can be a superstar. You'll bring up the profits for Cervox in the last quarter--You will be our Star Wars!"

"And if I refuse? Are you gonna kill me, too, like the others?"

"No, you are too valuable. We will simply adjust you, make you more reasonable."

MEDIUM BANAL CONTINUED

with her short hair, too. The sickly camaraderie, "Let's give it all we got, gang" was not offset with a Lou Grant or Sue Ann Nivens and just came off like a glass of honey. Embarrassing high school pep rally or talent night stuff. Gah. KAZ...Lawyer drama. Haven't we seen this about a hundred times before?

Some shows I liked... THE WHITE SHADOW. Although predictable (social problem wrapped up in time for the basketball game), Ken Howard plays his role with enough smart-assness to prevent Lucas Tanner disease and show us he's having a hell of a lot of fun with it. The kids aren't cute or mod or stereotypically black. I was tremendously impressed with the January 27th airing of an episode on a suspected homosexual player. It was done with consummate good taste and sensitivity. This show is also nicely directed (second only the New Avengers), in a time when tv directing is not an art. Especially nice basketball sequences.

PAPER CHASE...Drama here is low key, Houseman was never better. Although a bit restrained at times, and not terribly realistic (college ain't like that), it is done with care and a quiet style.

LIFELINE...The best new show of 1978. Gritty, torrid stuff--cinema verite studies of REAL doctors. The Jack Webb-style voice-over monotone is unsettling. Some scenes are real grabbers. You feel uncomfortable, as if you are a voyeur, watching people's pain, worry, and guts displayed for you. On a whole, still fascinating; kudos to Silverman for a daring move. Of course, it has been cancelled.

Some tv-movies I liked: BUD & LOU and FIRST YOU CRY, beautifully acted, were bitter looks at psychological dirty laundry, First You Cry has some of the funniest/ most bitter/affecting dialogue around. A QUESTION OF LOVE, with Gena Rowlands and Jane Alexander, a story of two lesbians seeking custody of a child. Derives its power from the refusal to become sensationalistic, it proves tv's power as a personal medium. The best drama here is gesture, nuance, and the silence between words. John Carpenter's tv-movie SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME with Lauren Hutton absolutely burns up the screen with brilliant camerawork and direction, proving tv-directing can be arty and flashy and clever in a DePalma-esque way.

My favorite tv pleasure however was (brace yourself) RESCUE FROM GILLIGAN's ISLAND. Sure, Gilligan's Island was bubblegum tv. But it was great bubblegum tv. This show had real charm, something the shows today lack (VEGAS, DALLAS, FANTASY ISLAND, THREE's COMPANY--gak). Bubblegum tv can work, if you know how. I'm a big fan of BEVERLY HILLBILLIES and GREEN ACRES (a tribute to tv surrealism which has yet to be completely appreciated)

Gilligan's Island is deserving of a greater fan following than it has. Hell, I enjoyed Mrs. Howell screaming for Fifi (the dog which they didn't bring with them in the first place), Gilligan's going to see (what else?) Star Wars, and Skipper crunching his hat (in that bizarre way of overacting only Alan Hale Jr. is capable of) and hitting Gilligan over the head with it. I even liked the bondage jokes and Gilligan's jokes about the Skipper's fat ass (if only for their total incongruity).

Done solemnly without a laugh track, the jokes take on a kind of profoundity as the crew (now rescued) is unable to adapt to the present day. They left America at a time when life was still innocent, in 1964. A time when business was honorable, science noble, sexuality glamourized, not exploited. The archtypes of the eternal child (Bob Denver, who at 42, is an amazing child actor), the crusty Skipper, the hardworking professor, the marrying homebody, the glamourous movie star, and philanthropic millionaires can no longer exist in our world.

Their innocence is no longer in fashion. Disillusioned with the 70's (aren't we all?) they embark on an anniversary cruise in the Minnow II. They crash from Gilligan's negligence, of course, on the same island they escaped on, and the circle is complete. They realize the family they had on the island was more precious than the life they would go back to in the 1970's. If only because of its utter simplicity, and naivete, a clever child-like indictment of our times. Aside from perhaps Mork and Mindy, the only truly memorable piece of television viewing this year.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko

KOOL AID, ANYONE?

The New York Times. November 21, 1978:

"Wearing gaily colored clothes, the bodies were clustered in family groups, side-by-side in deathly embrace, all but three dead from drinking a concoction made of Kool-Aid and cyanide. A surviving cult member gave the newsmen to reach the scene a story of death plots and madness, of parents spooning a poisonous punch into the mouths of their babies before drinking it themselves. Rev. Jim Jones had promised his racially integrated flock a utopia in the South American wilds. Instead, he gave them death...Many of them were older people who had turned their Social Security checks and their lives over to the custody of Mr. Jones. It was learned that the cult was routinely drilled in suicide by Mr. Jones, who had a vision of a need to destroy the community if it was ever attacked."

That weekend I went to Rocky Horror.

Suddenly, it all became clear to me. There, sitting in the dark theatre, surrounded by rice-throwing, toast-tossing, water-spraying, shouting, dancing groupies, some in costume, it was clear.

I had this idea for this article. And here it is:

Let's talk about cults. Let's talk about fandom. Let's talk about Rocky Horror.

What is a cult? Definition: A group of people united by devotion to a certain idea, figure, or ideal.

Guyana and Rocky Horror and fandom are all similar. The mechanics which operate in each are identical.

It consists of giving up part of your own spontaneity and individuality, and drawing on what is, instead, common.

The people in Guyana were looking for a new society, a society which they thought could be made possible through the People's Temple and Jim Jones.

Here in America we are supposed to be able to provide. Oh, we provide, we provide all the material goods and economic means for happiness. We provide television. But somewhere in all of this is a deep spiritual void and a psychological fissure.

Why do people join cults?

To belong.

Why do they want to belong?

Because the concept they have of themselves is so poorly defined, they are willing to allow groups and leaders to make decisions for them.

Let's talk about self concept, the one issue that is integral in Guyana. What is self concept? Just the collection of opinions, feelings, and observations you have about yourself. If these opinions are negative (i.e. I'm ugly, fat, untalented, shy, unpopular, clumsy, not of any value), our sense of "self", of being a person apart from other people, is reduced.

People who hate themselves need the confirmation of others. They need people to say "yes, you are a good person." If this persists, people begin to respect others so much that they allow THEM to make decisions and take responsibility for all the things in their lives.

What do we have in Guyana? People who had an existing spiritual vacuum (Why is it that no one in America feels the least bit responsible for these people? If they had to go all the way to a South American jungle to find happiness, isn't that some kind of indictment of the lack of alternatives available in America in the 70's?)

People who were mostly black, mostly poor, shat on and spewed out by the economic system. Combine those two and you are on your way to a low self image.

When someone has a low self image, that is when they are most susceptible to commit crimes, become alcoholics, addicts, and join cults.

Jim Jones was a powerful, charismatic person. He looked like the perfect person to turn over all your possessions and family and feelings to. He would make decisions for you.

In the end, he made the ultimate decision suicide. 919 people followed. Few protested Of course, some mention should be made of Jones' hypnosis, humiliation, starvation, and deprivation of sleep methods to induce further loyalty. But that doesn't cloud the issue: Why couldn't the people there have a strong enough sense of their own 'self', and a strong enough sense of the VALUE of their life, to say, "NO."

Yes, Guyana is horrible. Yes, like John Kennedy's assassination, it will affect people's minds for a long time.

But I still think we can learn something from it. How to avoid chronic cults.

I'm not just talking about religious cults. I'm talking about us, too, whether you realized it or not. Yes, us fans. Most of us are candidates for Kool-Aid, Vitamin Cyanide, more so than the general populace.

To what extent do we define ourselves in relation to the GROUPS we are part of (comic fan, sf fan, comic book letterhack, interlac member, Rocky Horror groupie, etc.) and to what extent do we have a strong sense of self?

How to check your sense of self: People with a high self concept, when they fail, don't take the failure personally. They learn from it and move on. People with a high self concept have a sense of kinetics: they are rarely depressed, apathetic, frozen by anger or grudges--they work, they love, they are constantly changing.

People with a low self concept, on the other hand, don't take risks. They are afraid of making decisions without checking with the group first.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than in apas--the constant politicking and arguing about constitutions and fan fights and grudges are the best indictments.

Most comic and sf fans entered "fandom" because they were too skinny, too fat, too "gawky" "nerdy", clumsy, shy, ugly (or thought they were ugly because some idiots told them so), wore glasses (four eyes raise your hands!), were embarrassed of their parents, their clothes, their homes --anything which was a blow to their confidence.

Many fans entered fandom at an early age, this poor self concept firmly established. Years later, they haven't changed.

There is nothing wrong with being a fan. We can get in contact with people who have interests and philosophies similar to our own. Being in fandom only becomes bad when the need to be a fan results not from a continually reevaluated decision, but from fear of not being accepted out there in the "mundane" world. We have a snarl term for those people out there who have shunned us: "MUNDANES!" Boy, are we a sick group!

How many of you would have taken the Kool-Aid on November 19th? I think at least half of you would.

Fandom is a great place to hide from your problems, just like comics are. Fandom prevents you from changing; it will give you the unconditional respect and acceptance which can keep you on your negative self-image the rest of your life.

Next issue I'm going to run an analysis of fans: specifically Rocky Horror and comic fans, the two groups I grew up with. Please, every one of you write: Let me know what makes fandom tick for you? Why is it so interesting to you? Are you hiding? Has being in fandom given you confidence to be more independent and proud of your other attributes? Or has it supported your self-hate and prevented you from changing your self-concept into a more positive one?

In 10 years in fandom, I've found fans to be reluctant to talk about serious issues, ESPECIALLY this one. But I will hound you until I get answer. I'm a bastard.

What cults do you belong to? And tomorrow, if they ceased to exist, how would you react?

The answers should prove enlightening.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko

JANUARY 29, 1979, ENTRY 17.

Peach's tiny little fingers were sweating. He spread his hands and set them down on the desk in front of him as he spoke. He wheezed now. The warm, soothing voice had been replaced. Bill-Dale was strapped in a chair across from the desk.

"Now, I do wish you would struggle less. There is no way you will get out of those. Let us discuss AFTA. The main problem with it, as I see, and Bill-Dale Marcinko in particular, is your humanity-- you laugh, you cry, you are afraid. You print reviews of these things, what are they called "fanzines" --these cheap little "efforts" because you want to help out your friends. You cannot be human and successful. What the American public wants is a hero built on a great mountain of hype. These fanzine reviews, these comic reviews, these attempts at social comment, controversy, satire, the black humor--that will all have to go. I am leaving some of the material in AFTA #3, although I have stripped those awful 'fan' things. To be fannish is not to be successful. Look at the big publishers of comic book magazines--Gary Groth, Alan Light--they know better than to run fanzine reviews. No one cares. People, fans, they want pretty pictures, fluff. They want reviews and previews about the next movie or book or tv show. They are Pavlov's children. They don't want to be aroused. To think. To feel. As soon as we work out the rough spots in that respect, you will be on your way."

"BUT I WON'T GIVE IT UP!" Bill-Dale cried. "IF YOU TAKE THE PASSION YOU HAVE NOTHING LEFT. NOTHING OF ANY VALUE!"

"Ah, but you will give it up. You see, modern science, modern psychology has given us a number of techniques, behavior modification, shock therapy. If we can make the Sixties, and all your wretched thoughts of love painful, your mind will do what I will to survive. You will adapt."Peach pushed the intercom. "Send in the Doctor to take him to the therapy room."

"BUT I'M NOT SICK!" Bill-Dale screamed.

"Dr. Baxter is a specialist. He will remove all your...problems. You will never have to worry, feel guilty, feel rejected, feel lonely, feel depressed, feel inadequate, or get angry...ever...again."

JANUARY 30, 1979, ENTRY 18.

Bill-Dale was strapped to a chair. When he woke up, there were wires attached to his palms and the soles of his feet. There was a movie screen in front of him and speakers to either side.

The movie screen lit up. It was a film of the march on the Pentagon. This was followed by newsreel footage of the Chicago convention. There was Jerry Rubin. And Abbie Hoffman. God, if only he was back there--if only it could be that way again...

Suddenly, Bill-Dale felt a shock shoot through him. It was like someone took a hot metal poker and try to sautee his intestines with it. The hair on his arms and legs sizzled.

"AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

He saw a tape of Bob Dylan singing "Masters of War"

"AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH! AHH! AHH!" The second shock was worse than the first.

Bill-Dale heard his own words being read to him. Someone was reading from WHY I LOVE AMERICA, one of the things Bill was proud of.

"AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH! AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!" When would it end?

It went on for ten days. Bill-Dale must have heard every song, seen every film of everyone he had known or been influenced by to become the person he was. Each image was punctuated by a horrible shock. Peach was right. Bill-Dale was beginning to stop caring. He was very tired. The circuits which burned hot in his brain before were dim.

As he had said, Rupert Peach changed the old format of AFTA, got a new printer. The new printer fixed it so this issue looked more like a magazine, 68 pages, glossy cover, newsprint on the inside. Peach did pull the fanzine reviews and added a preview of the new AFTA, which would be called EVERYONE ALIVE.

Random Samplings

The best and worst of recent comic books

by Ed Via

The Hulk 230

Elliot Maggin replaces Roger Stern, Jim Mooney replaces Sal Buscema, and Bob Layton replaces the inker of the month, as a result of which, a bad story replaces the intriguing plotline that was running in The Hulk. After smashing a group of midwestern farmers and a bunch of small town policemen who exist for no reason other than to get smashed, the gamma-spawned brute finds himself being abducted by a bug-like alien who wants to study him because he's the color of vegetation. The Hulk wants none of this, of course, so he busts his way out of the alien's spaceship, but not before the strange being has scarped some dirt out from under his fingernails. In time, it turns out that the soil from underneath those doubtless filthy fingernails is just what the alien needs to grow food to save his starving world. By supplanting the storyline involving Moonstone and Doc Sampson's attempts to help the Hulk adjust to life as it is and not as he wishes it was and putting a pointless tale such as this one in its place, those who chronicle the adventures of The Hulk have done themselves in for no good reason. "Harvest of Fear" is neither funny or ironic or anything else its delineators appearently wanted it to be. There's nothing worse than watching someone struggling to tell a good story and suddenly realizing he's not going to make it, which is what we see Elliot Maggin doing here.

Ms. Marvel 21

The character who has done as complete a turnaround as any in comics stands toe-to-toe with the sentient Lizard People-who dwell apart from Man in what is truly a spectacular issue. Writer Chris Claremont and artist Dave Cockrum have done such a fantastic job of breaking with the book's wretched past that Ms. Marvel, who was once little more than a reverse-gender Captain Marvel, is now someone who adventures can be assessed purely on their own merits. The merits of this one are quite substantial, from the magnificent cover depicting a scene right out of Cecil B. DeMille's "Samson and Delilah" to the sequence that finds MM battling a slew of Lizard People followed by a giant snake to the one which shows her telling the leader of those beings how things are going to be from then on. The compromise she makes with him is one based on trust and the threat of massive retaliation, which gives it something in common with most of the political/compromises made in this century. What is most impressive about Claremont's characterization is that he has made Carol Danvers a strong-willed individual who is still very fair. She is someone to be trusted if others give her a square deal, but also someone to be feared by whoever dares double-cross her. Drawn by Dave Cockrum and Al Milgrom, who perform superbly from start to finish. What is so utterly amazing about the new Ms. Marvel is that a character who was quite inconspicuous just a few short months ago is well on her way to becoming the exemplary super-heroine of the 1970s.

Red Sonja 12

A Frank Brunner cover which is just about the only good thing this issue has to offer introduces the latest installment of Roy Thomas and Clair Noto's extended storyline concerning the Hyrkanian She-Devil's trials and tribulations on behalf of Suumaro, the sorceress' son who is trying to regain the throne of Skranos, the vast Hyborian Age city ruled by his treacherous human father. The first couple of chapters in this ongoing series were highly entertaining, but the last few have been dreadful. In this one, a green demon sends Sonja and Suumaro after a magic emblem of unspecified potency. The emblem turns out to be a golden chalice, the demon turns out to be a servant of Apah Alah, Suumaro's mother, and the tale itself turns out to be a rather dull exercise on the part of everyone concerned. The two questers battle a bunch of blood-sucking crimson plants while the corceress looks on in amusement; Sonja feeds the green demon to one of them after he attacks her; and Suumaro, chalice in hand, takes off for parts unknown after telling his mother he doesn't want or need her help in regaining his throne. All this is told in an overwritten, verbose manner in which everything the artists have drawn is described at great length. The seemingly interminable captions, a Thomas rarity, are by and large unnecessary, as is much of the dialogue. Drawn by John Buscema and Joe Rubinstein. At one point, Roy has Sonja stating that her sword can't get through the green demon's scales, which is strange, since the artists drew no scales anywhere near the spot she was slashing.

Savage Sword of Conan 35

Roy Thomas strikes out again, but this time it's because of the lameness of the story he's adapting rather than anything he himself has done wrong. That story is L. Sprague DeCamp and Lin Carter's "Black Tears" an uninspiring tale that's as utterly vacuous as the desert in which much of it takes place. The DeCamp/Carter Conan stories often begin well, but run out of gas far short of their endings. In this instance, Conan leads a desperate cavalry up slopes lined with archers, taking his men right into the teeth of the enemy with a savage cry on his lips. But after the Turanians who opposed him have been disposed of, Conan goes on to be abandoned by his own superstitious Zuagirs, who won't accompany him through a desert they believe to be cursed. After that, it's downhill all the way. Conan is found by the desert-dwelling Enosh, lord of Akhlat the Accursed, who informs him of the existence of a goddess-thing from another plane of the Multiverse; another dimension if you will; who is making life miserable for the people of Akhlet. Conan, of course, gets the unhappy assignment of going up against this three-eyed "goddess", which he reluctantly does. As with most of the DeCamp/Carter pastiches, "Black Tears" is a pale shadow of the Conan stories of Robert E. Howard. It has action and a supernatural menace, but that action is for the most part quite tame compared to that in the REH originals, and Conan's dialogue isn't anywhere near as good--his words have no iron in them. Illustread very unimaginatively by Ernie Chan.

Spider-Man 187

Spider-Man and Captain America battle both the villainous Electro and the threat of an outbreak of Bubonic Plague in a Marv Wolfman/Jim Starlin collaboration that would serve as a good model for the way most Spider-Man stories ought to be handled. Wolfman lets the worry-wart star of the book agonize over his relationship with those who are close to him, but it never gets in the way of the story he and Starlin are telling. As for the red-white-and-blue Avenger, one can't help but wish that he were given the same kind of treatment in his own title that he receives here. Confident, proud, uncompromising in his dedication to the task of saving lives, but ready to admit he's not always right, Cap is the perfect complement to Spider-Man, whose comparative inexperience and youthful energy and drive get him in over his head, but whose not-inconsiderable super-human power is enough to get him out again. This is the first issue in which Wolfman has pitted Spidey against a foe who's worthy of his mettle, and the results make it obvious that this is the kind of thing he should have been doing all along. Artwise, Jim Starlin did the layouts, in addition to co-plotting the tale, Bob McLeod did the finishing, and anyone who likes imaginative storytelling did the appreciating. Starlin and McLeod's depiction of both heroes is outstanding, but the excellence doesn't stop there: every person in this whole issue is drawn in a smooth manner, as if the artists were trying to make everything as real as possible without doing anything to hurt the dramatic qualities of the story.

Superman 329

The wrap-up of Marty Pasko's "Kryptonoid" two-parter is a skillful blend of action and mystery and even a little self-parody in the form of the supporting cast having a good laugh over Lana Lang's suspicions regarding Clark Kent being Superman. One has the definite feeling that what they (as well as Marty) are actually chuckling over is the notion that anyone who's been with Clark for as long as she has could help but know who he really is. But this is marginalia, though exceptionally interesting marginalia. What is truly outstanding about Pasko's story is the way he takes a tired premise, that of another weird menace from Krypton coming to Earth to give the Man of Steel fits, and makes something original out of it. For the Kryptonoid is actually a synthesis of two different living organisms, one from Krypton and the other from Earth, and another, unliving one, a Superman robot, which serves as the vessel for the other two. The best part of the story is its perversely ironic finale, which cannot be discussed for reasons of human decency, but it is so marvelously worked out that it must at least be mentioned. Pencilled by Curt Swan, the finest Superman artist who has yet lived, inked by Frank Chiaramonte, who has showed marked improvement over the past few months. A dumb "Mr. and Mrs. Superman" tale follows the concluding chapter of the Kryptonoid saga, but the brilliance of the lead feature is enough to put it in with the best of the current comics despite the shortcomings of the back-up.

X-Men 116

Marvel's misunderstood mutants go up against The Petrified Man in a thrilling, explosive story written with the emphasis on the effects of battle upon those who are under fire and drawn with a rich beauty that's really quite staggering. As the man forced to take charge after Cyclops, Colossus, Banshee, and the guest-starring Ka-Zar are captured by the savage minions of The Petrified Man, Wolverine displays heretofore unseen leadership capacity as he and Storm and Nightcrawler invade the stronghold of the enemy in a daring attempt to stop the false god whose mad schemes threaten to destroy the Savage Land. The trio rescues their fellow mutants along the way, of course, in a bold move that sets up two very exciting sequences, one involving a tense confrontation between Cyclops and the Petrified Man, the other featuring Storm's courageous dive down a narrow shaft in an attempt to save an enemy. Chris Claremont, who wrote this exceptional story, manages to give each of the X-Men a meaningful role in the proceedings, which is no small feat considering that there are six of them vying for a share of the spotlight. His fine script has only one rough spot, which comes when Wolverine tells Zabu, Ka-Zar's Sabretooth, to go back for help. This little touch of "Lassie" comes early on, however, and is easy to ignore. Drawn by John Byrne and Terry Austin, who come up with a double-page spread that is as meticulously detailed as anything that's been seen in some little time, and who tell the story using a mixture of many and few paneled pages that is incredibly skillful.

I read it in the New York Times
That was on the stands today
It said dreams were out of fashion
There'll be no more wasted passions
To clutter up our play.
--Harry Chapin

CHEAP SHOTS

Comics Reviews by Al Schroeder III

Silver Surfer book

Too drawn-out, too many monologues by the Surfer and Galactus, NO mention of the Fantastic Four--and yet, I probably enjoyed this book more than I did the Surfer's own mag.

Kirby, whatever his deficiencies (numerous as they are) as a writer, kept in mind that the Surfer was an ALIEN, something Buscema's Surfer never quite realized. In THIS book, the Surfer showed more dramatically his unfamillarity with Earth, and his perplexity with some of the Earthlings' habits and devices (witness his puzzlement over the pen he duplicated when he assumed earthling-form). Lee's dialogue was at times much too pretentious, especially with Galactus' monologues. And yet--some of the old skill showed through.

I liked this book more than the Surfer's mag, but I must confess that I always thought Lee took the Surfer too seriously--the dialogue is simply TOO pretentious to be believed--and the Surfer--unlike any other feature Lee EVER invented--had no supporting characters to enhance it. Even Shalla Bal, the only other recurring character besides a few villains, only appeared in a very few issues. I found the old Surfer mag dull. I find the Surfer book LESS dull, but still dull.

I liked the ending--in which the Surfer actually returns to Galactus, actually ending (for now, at least) the Silver Surfer saga. When one is used to series characters, it's rather a shock to see a series actually END, the way this one did.

Some of the reviews below use a number rating system. 1=Worthless, 5=Average, 10=Superb.

Avengers 181

April 1979, Writer: PAUL LEVITZ, Artist: JOE STATON...The Death of Batman. Marvellous idea, but somewhat flawed in execution. Instead of this Bill Jensen nobody, Batman's killer should have either been the Joker, his arch-enemy, or the son or daughter of Joe Chill, who killed his parents. Either choice would have been dramatically satisfying, rounding out the Batman legend in style. Don't get me wrong--it was a good story (although somewhat flawed by being broken into two parts, but that's hardly the writer's fault.) and very dramatic. It just could have been so much BETTER. (8)

Adventure 462

March 1979, Writer: DAVID MICHELINE, Artists: JOHN BYRNE + GENE DAY...The long awaited reshuffling of the Avengers has finally taken place, after gathering every possible Avenger and pseudo-Avenger to battle Michael, and in general, I am VERY much in agreement with Agent Gyrich's government-approved line-up. The main surprise was the inclusion of the Falcon, and the main disappointment was the exclusion of Thor--but certainly I have no objections to the inclusion of Sam Wilson. The Black Panther is a fine character, but he can add nothing to the team that Captain America can't--and I must confess I prefer Capt. But the Falcon has his own motifs and abilities that are separate from Cap's (and hopefully he will gain even more abilities in the months ahead)--and the inclusion of a black member in the "core" team will increase reader identification among black readers--and, after all, a team really can't represent American life today without at least one black member. (I'm still waiting for Black Lightning to join the JLA.)

I also very much agree with the other members of the line-up...especially the inclusion of the Wasp and the exclusion of Yellowjacket. The Wasp has always been conceptually a much more coherent character than Hank Pym in his various manifestations--and much more engaging in personality. And of course, Cap, Iron Man, the Vision, Beast, and Scarlet Witch have proved to be some of the more interesting and versitile Avengers over the years.

I think it's a good line-up, with real possibilities. I think both Thor and Ms. Marvel should be semi-regulars, to add power when needed (The appearance of the popular Thor will gain sales for the mag. And although I loathed the old Ms. Marvel, I very much like the new one, and feel she should get all the publicity she can.)--but that the rest of the Avengers can disappear for all I care. I am ESPECIALLY glad to see the last of Wonder Man, a very non-original character--with very unoriginal powers and a fairly uninteresting personality (although his feelings of cowardice have been slightly interesting) I wouldn't mind it if Wonder Man showed up as a supporting character in the Ms. Marvel magazine, but as a regular Avenger? Thor contributes more power and does so more interestingly, adding a real contribution to the personality of the team. I am also glad to see Hawkeye out--too much like the JLA's Green Arrow to be acceptable as a regular member these days.

"On the Matter of Heroes!" had relatively little action--but it held the promise of an interesting team in action to come.

Justice League 163

February 1979, Writer: GERRY CONWAY, Artists: DICK DILLIN, FRANK McLAUGHLIN...I have a higher opinion of Gerry Conway's writing than much of current fandom seems to have. Oh, occasionally he is unimaginative--has a tendency of overwriting and getting maudlin if not checked--and he does give us an occasional total turkey, like STEEL. (But remember Kahn and Orlando changed the original concept considerably.) But what writer doesn't? And he has done some VERY nice stuff in the past, including the JLA--his most successful JLA issue being the revival/revamping of Doctor Destiny. I don't idolize Conway, but I usually find him enjoyable and sensitive.

"Concert of the Damned", however, was one of the lesser issues. Not a total turkey, but the idea of summoning obviously mystical demons out of an electronic sound synthesizer --a certain amount of pseudo-science is of course permissable in a comic book story, but I think Conway overstepped the bounds here. He did give some motivation to his villain, "The Amazing Allegro"--but the villain was so ludicrous in appearance and shaky in his super-abilities that it was hard to work up a decent hiss.

Much more interesting was the delving into Zatabna's past, as we for the first time learn something of her mother. I think the addition of Zatanna was an extremely wise move (See, democracy DOES work--reader polls made the best choice) adding a unique power to the League (magic), balancing the male-female ratio more, and giving us a new character to develop. I must admit I am apathetic towards the new costume--but that may be a black fishnet fetish on my part, combined with the fact that I am, so far as a woman's appearance goes, a bit of a leg man. But in general, the Zatanna sub-plot was so interesting that I resented spending time with the "Amazing Allegro" main plot. I would have preferred it if we had just spent several issues in which the entire League delves into Zatanna's past. I DO think the addition of Zatanna was a wise move (much wiser than the induction of Hawkgirl and the reinstatement of the Red Tornado, one of the few things I disagreed about Englehart's tenure as JLA-scripter) and hope a reader poll few new members will become an annual or bi-annual event.

Marvel Two-In-One 50

April 1979, Writer/artist: JOHN BYRNE... People who know me know I have a thing for the early versions of heroes, and this is the best example of all. For in this one, the Thing meets his earlier self--the bitter, brooding, half-mad Gumpy-looking monster (WITHOUT a trace of Brooklyn accent) that I loved, lo, these many years ago. Byrne captured the differences between "past Thing" and "present Thing" flawlessly, both in art and dialogue, proving he's as good a scripter as artist, which is going some. Best MTIO story EVER, and one of the best Marvel stories this year. Readers who only know the comical Thing of today will be shocked. Give this a 10. Heck, give it a 100! (10)

Micronauts 4

April 1979, Writer: BILL MANTLO, Artist: MIKE GOLDEN...This isn't about this issue particularly, but about the series itself. Contrary to my expectations, since after all this is a book based on some Mego toys, this is turning into one of the FUN books of the year. Great artwork, fun scripting and characterizations, neat villains (Baron Karza is too much of an imitation of Darth Vader, though.) an interesting gimmick--miniaturized aliens fighting amidst bumbling human giants--sort of a cross between Gulliver's Travels and Star Wars.

Far superior to its sister book, Shogun Warriors. (8)

Super-Friends 17

February 1979, Writer: E. NELSON BRIDWELL, Artists:RAMONA FRADON + BOB SMITH...The best of the Super Friends issues (but of course, look at the others...) with AT LAST a competent villain, the Time Trapper--none of these pikers like Skyrocket or Manegerie Man or Kingslayer. SUPERB continuity, Bridwell's strong point, making the Time Trapper also WW's old enemy, Time Master, excellent scenes of the doom of Krypton, perhaps capturing the poignancy of the doom better than ever before, and the return of Lyra Ler-Rol, a memorable character who never returned. Fradon's art was also less cartoony, living up to her true potential. Give it a 5--maybe a 6. It's moving in the right direction. (5)

Thor 280

February 1979, Writer: ROY THOMAS, Artists: WAYNE BORING, TOM PALMER...In mid-epic, Roy Thomas tossed us this little off-beat book, and it was one of most delightful single-issue stories to appear this year. "Crisis on Twin Earths!" from a plot by Don and Maggie Thompson, was of course a Superman pastiche--with Wayne Boring returning to the art--involving the two Hyperions in the fight to the finish--almost. (In fact, Thor really didn't have a heckuva lot to do this issue. Any Marvel hero would have done as well.) The in-jokes abounded (my favorite bit was that Hyperion's arch-foe, Burbank, had <u>too much</u> hair instead of too little) and were at times a trifle too broad (Hyperion's alter-ego was named "Mark Milton") but on the whole it was a very <u>fun</u> issue. It doesn't take your breath away, like Englehart/Rogers' Detective or Claremont and Byrne's X-Men--but it was very entertaining.

Although Boring was obviously rushed with the art, the figures were unmistakably his, and of course, Boring's skyscrapers and mad scientist machinery are unmistakably stylized. Also enjoyable was Hyperion's "Lois Lane", Lonni Lattimer, as shallow as the original. My biggest complaint of the whole issue is about consulting editor Jim Shooter. You see, the "evil" Hyperion had just appeared in the Avengers Annual, and appeared about to reform after talking with the Vision. Some sort of reference to that meeting was needed (It couldn't have happened before the Avengers Annual, for Hyperion was an amnesiac "Mr. Kant" at the time) and since Roy was on the West Coast and couldn't know all the details about the then-upcoming Avengers Annual, it was Shooter's job to tell him. Sloppy work on Shooter's part.

Wonder Woman 253

March 1979, Writer: JACK C. HARRIS, Artist: JOSE DELBO...Well, not anywhere near as bad as Inversion (who ranks with Razorback as the worst comics creation of the 70's) but still pretty bad. The spirit of Hippolyte's sister (from the Amazon Tails--uh, Tales--series) named Diana (NOT Manalippe or Otrere or Antiope, as the sisters of Hippolyte are named in the original Greek myths) just happens to find a silver-and-gold asteroid which just happens to be able to embody an astral form. She returns to earth and

attacks WW and the Amazons, thinking WW is a bewitched version of her body, Ri-i-i-ight. The Amazons are still dressed like harem wives or tin-foil-fetish prostitutes, although it's not quite so bad as it was during the T&A shots in the Amazons mini-series. Wonder Woman is a series with incredible potential, as rich in mythological background as Thor, with characters who cry out to be developed, with some GOOD villains just waiting to be revived--instead, Harris is creating new villains, which would be laudable if they were any good. But they're HORRIBLE. Diana Prince is fitting in pretty well with the astroanut program, though, better than I expected--but I still have my doubts about an astronaut, whose time is very budgeted, having the time to be a super-heroine, too. Give it a 2 or 3, but no more. (3)

X Men 118

February 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artists: JOHN BYRNE, RICARDO VILLAMONTE... Y'know, when X-Men went monthly, I said "Uh-oh." Up till then it had been a beautiful, well-written magazine. I was skeptical about either Claremont or Byrne could keep up the standards of excellence they had established on a monthly basis.

Boy, was I wrong!

And as evidence, I offer "The Submergence of Japan!" Sensitive scripting, superb characterization and a quite interesting plot. In each issue, Claremont tends to explore a facet of one particular X-Men's past and character, and this issue the focus was on the aggressively antisocial Wolverine. We learned more about his background (he once visited Japan before) and this issue met a woman who was his exact opposite--traditional, gentle, sensitive--in Sunfire's female cousin. And, as always, opposites attract. Other good points this issue was the use of Colleen Wing and Misty Knight as supporting characters--two of Claremont's best characters, independent feminists who define their independence in action, not cliches. Many writers fall into the trap of the "Libber" stereotype when they feel with feminists. Not so Claremont.

And of course, there's Byrne's artwork. No letdown in quality there. He knows when to borrow from Adams and other artists while still maintaining his own, unique, and beautiful style. In the title page, one can almost feel the heat of the firestorm that is gripping a Japanese city. That Byrne can get as much detail in his drawings on a monthly basis--not to mention his semi-regular stints on Marvel Team-Up--is little short of unbelievable.

This is a rave notice, people. I have NO criticism to make. Colossus is a little underdeveloped in character, but only in comparison--in any other book he would easily be the most developed character. If ANY new book will raise the standards for comic book work the way Lee and Kirby's Fantastic Four did in the Sixties, it's Byrne and Claremonts X-Men. Not since Englehart left Detective have readers been treated to such excellence. PERIOD (10)

1984

1984, a Warren Magazine

I should have known better, but I actually expected something good. The problem with 1984 is the same one as ails the majority of comics these days: Instead of living up to the potential of the medium, they just piss around.

The concept behind 1984 started off well enough: a return to the carefree joys of youth, comics that are fun, fantasy of the sort that made my childhood precious. All good and well. Unfortunately this is confused with being juvenile, and frankly, I'm tired of seeing writers and artists jack off their imaginations. It's not hard to feel guilt and shame while reading an issue.

Certainly this comic's nothing special. I haven't yet confused it with the other Warren titles, but only because I always check the title of a comic before I read it. Inside, the stories are about as noteworthy. We're treated to yet another extraterrestial conspiracy to impregnate Earth's women--Arrrgh. The worst example of this -- "The Janitor" -- nine pages devoted to duplicated cheesecake and porn scenes. And there's other offenders: the cowboy space captains, nympho aliens, the heroine with her vow of celibacy, and the slime-covered monstrosity. We've seen them a million times before, often when we were kids, but I don't recall them being this inane.

There's no new talent here, and not much talent at all; simply the usual from DuBay, Cuti, Ortiz, and Richard Corben. Especially Corben. I may get crucified for this, but what's so neat about Corben? Has he got something against hair? Why do all his characters look and act alike, even more so than other creators' characters? He does astonishing things with color and graduated values, but that doesn't excuse him for bad draftsmanship. Maybe it's me, but I always get the feeling he forgot to draw a dunce cap on his males.

There are a few bright points to every issue. So far, Alex Nino has been featured every go around. His layouts, his rendering techniques, make him one of the most dynamic and important comic (or fantasy, if you prefer) artists working today. Then there's Rudy Nebres' excellent and delicate line work--it's possible that one day his line may equal Lou Fine's. Oh yes, there's Wally Wood No new ground is broken here, but I can't fault Wood--Warren did a real hatchet job on one of Wood's strips, and Jim W. owes him an apology.

But there's not much else. A few chuckles, a few pages of outstanding art just isn't enough to make me feel good about this title. If you want a striptease though, this is the place to get it; in the first issue, a story revolves around a strip show, and nothing else.

In a few words, 1984 is a cheap shot.

--Mark Lamport

Taking its title from an old horror reprint book, this is supposed to be a terror-detective issue. Featuring vampires, werewolves, and maniacs, all that seems to be missing is the detective angle.

To be sure, Hodiah Twist, in "The Hero Killer Principle," is a Holmes pastiche, and the story itself is a blackly humorous Christie take-off, but it is hardly a detective story. Don McGregor's hero lives in a world that has no time for real heroes, despire the need for them. Twist's life is one of futility and marginal insanity; the only figures in the story who work actively for good are eccentrics, living in dreams. In some ways, Twist presents an even grimmer world-view than Dragonflame's. This story, the real gem of the issue, has evidently been rewritten by editor Rick Marschell (the credits aren't clear). The result may make easier reading than pure McGregor, but the author's unique viewpoint is watered down.

Another holdover from the Marvel monster days, Lilith, appears in a Steve Gerber story, "Death By Disco." I'm not sure just what's going on here; evidently, the daughter of Dracula gets off on dancer types. The story itself is plotted according to the "Marvel formula" that Gerber claims to loathe. The reader is treated to a few pages of gratuitous violence, as Lilith sadistically wipes out a couple of muggers, goes home for a few pages of subplot, then takes on the main conflict of the issue. Other than Lilith and her lover, the cast consists mainly of some disco dancers, none of whom act or react with any degree of logic. While such may have been Gerber's point, he doesn't make it clearly enough for a successful story. The best angle of the piece is that it doesn't center on Martin Gold (Lilith's/Angel O'Hara's lover) looking for a job and getting arrested, as with previous stories in the series. Oh, well; maybe next time, Angel's four-year pregnancy will finally come to full term.

The issue is rounded out with an inventory horror short by Marv Wolfman. "Voices" is as horrendously overwritten as it is underplotted. Reminiscient of the (much better) stories Archie Goodwin used to do for early Creepy, this one is notable for inker Tom Palmer's inking and tones, a pleasant contrast to Tony DeZuniga's also-superb pen-and-ink effects on the other two stories. The entire issue is pencilled by Gene Colan, whose unique and flowing style lends some cohesiveness to what is otherwise pretty much of a mixed bag.

--Pierce Askegren

FEBRUARY 2, 1979, ENTRY 19.

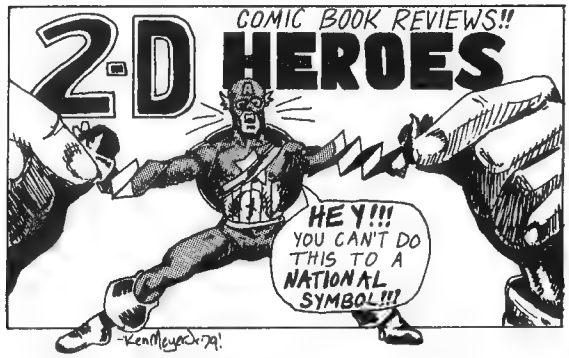
Got a letter today from Mark Collier: It read: "Only about a month ago as I write this, over 900 people were destroyed. A madman, Jim Jones, helped them on their nice little way to destruction. He used them, abused them, and directed them. It culminated in their deaths.

"AFTA is a relevant fanzine. Let's discuss this matter here. Bill has mentioned a dislike for people who twist the Bible. Many people do twist it, but this has been the most visibly horrible case recently.

"Jim Jones was mad or possessed. But one time, did he have 'good beliefs?' Was there a Jones inside that would have hated what he did? Where did his parents go wrong? As a madman we shouldn't hate him any more than someone who is ill with some disease. But we hate what he did."

Mark's letter goes on, but I think you get the idea.

My reply is: "Mark, I don't think AFTA is the place to talk about issues of that type. Here our main interest is people. People in the comic books, tv, films, and books. As such, events like Guyana (which should be covered on the evening news, and not discussed or analyzed in AFTA) have no bearing on Mr. Peach and my new aims with AFTA (soon to be EVERYONE ALIVE). We have no interest in material of a 'relevant' or 'personal' type.



Some of the reviews below use a number rating system. 1=Worthless, 5=Average, 10=Superb.

BRAVE AND THE BOLD #148

March 1979, Writer: BOB HANEY, Artists: JOE STATON & JIM APARO...A tobacco smuggling ring and Gotham's stolen Christmas converge in a plausible, if convienent, manner as Batman and Plastic Man rush against a deadline and bureaucratic pressure. I love Plastic Man, but I protest his being pictured as a drifting bum. Also, Batman's frivolity and Gordon's curtness on page 2 are extremely out of character, considering the situation. And on page 16, it's not only unclear how Plastic Man scoops up the snow, the manner in which he gets rid of it is simply impossible unless his head is empty. Yet there are good points. Staton's cartoonish style is almost right for Plas, and Aparo's inking maintains the necessary continuity. Also, for once the heroes on the cover are actually heroes rather than buffoons, definitely a relief from the usual DC clownish cover.

--Mark Lamport

CAPTAIN AMERICA #232

April 1979, Writer: ROGER McKENZIE, Artists: SAL BUSCEMA, DON PERLIN...Disturbing is the word for this apparently harmless bit of fluff. Lacking any kind of direction, Roger and Jim Shooter have somehow decided to bring back the Cap of the early 70's. Including his whining over being twenty years out of touch. A Sons of the Serpents type hate group. Morgan, a stereotypical black crime lord. Conflict on the streets, and Cap as cop, something that didn't work that well the first time around.

It's disturbing, because instead of trying to deal with America as it exists now, editor Jim Shooter has decided that the relatively "safe" period of the early 70's is better than trying to figure out what to do with Captain America in the here and now. That the problems of yesterday (and they are all still with us) can be treated as sane, safe, boring material, is revolting.

And that Marvel shows its ignorance about the current problems this country faces, only keeps it in character with the Marvel we've been seeing the last few years.

--Steven Alan Bennett (1)

CAPTAIN MARVEL #60

January 1979, Writer: DOUG MOENCH, Artists: PAT BRODERICK, BRUCE PATTERSON... Moench and Broderick are revitalizing Captain Marvel. Complicated, subtle, often humorous scripting, beautiful art, beautiful coloring by George Roussos; this is another case where everybody is coming together with their effords to create a perfect unison. From leftovers of Starlin's Thanos/Titan tales, Moench is creating a new budding epic in its own right, and I hope it runs two years. The question arises, will Mar-Vell ever bloom in a situation unconnected with Titan? The question also arises, does he ever have to?

--Mark Willard

FANTASTIC FOUR #203

February 1979, Writer: MARV WOLFMAN, Artists: KEITH POLLARD, JOE SINNOTT... I can't do all paeons of praise. This is not a bad issue; I'd call it very workmanlike. I just do not get excited by Wolfman's scripts or Pollard's pencils. Doubles of the FF are created, each battles his own double for awhile, then they switch and battle each others', then it turns into a free-for-all. A narrow save from a very old cliche. Wolfman creates a new mutant, whom Reed Richards directs to Charles Xavier; I sincerely hope that the idea will be forgotten, since this new creation is more suited for the Legion of Super-Heroes.

--Mark Willard

FLASH #270

February 1979, Writer: CARY BATES, Artists: IRV NOVICK, FRANK McLAUGHLIN...This is the much-ballyhooed "big change" issue of the FLASH, often billed as presenting a "whole new character." That would seem to be a totally accurate assessment; the Flash I grew up with was a DC character, not a Marvel.

In the space of 17 pages, Barry Allen acquires a wife who is a shrew, a domineering boss, a bad image with the press, and a subplot about an impending menace. About the only "traditional" Flash element is the new villain, the Clown, who is as tiresome and cornball as the other adversaries who have lurched through these pages for the past few years.

Granted, the Flash is a title badly in need of a new direction, new approach, a new angle, or something. The book already has a new editor and a new penciller is promised; maybe a new writer would do the trick?

Or a new cancellation date?

--Pierce Askegren

GREEN LANTERN #113

February 1979, Writer: DENNY O'NEIL, Artists: ALEX SAVIUK, FRANK CHIARAMONTE... In a society where most Christmas messages strike with the sincerity of a Barbie Doll ad, O'Neil's personal vision is a welcome alternative. As usual, Denny demonstrates a thorough understanding of his characters--especially Green Arrow.

The issue loses points on art, though. Chiaramonte handles the inking well, but Saviuk is far from establishing himself as another Adams or Grell. Why can't DC attract a veteran talent to draw this book? The characters and the writer deserve better.

--Paul Emrath (8)

HOWARD THE DUCK #30

March 1979, Writer: BILL MANTLO, Artists: GENE COLAN, AL MILGROM...Every so often, Bill Mantlo shows signs of breaking out and moving beyond his preconceptions of what constitutes good "comic book writing." With the responsibility of writing for Howard thrust upon him, we may be seeing what Mantlo can do when he applies himself.

Mantlo's debut was surprising. He already displays a firm grasp of Howard's character. And he avoided the trap that Marv Wolfman fell into: turning out a parody of Gerber's duck. With Gene Colan's help, Mantlo, with his first effort, produced a version of Howard that succeeded in being funny in a world not all that far removed from our own reality. Perhaps it's a sign of Mantlo's success that he inherited the legendary Gerber curse: pages 23 and 26 were reversed.

The only flaw in an otherwise-perfect handling of HTD is the fact that the word "parody" has a second meaning that isn't the same thing as "satire." There's a subtle difference. And until Mantlo learns what satire involves he'll remain just a tiny bit short of the standard Gerber set with the early issues of the series.

--Dick O'Malley (9)

IRON MAN #119

February 1979, Writer: DAVID MICHELINE, Artists: JOHN ROMITA, JR., BOB LAYTON... With the recent debut of David Michelinie as scripter, the Golden Avenger's title has become one of the very few books that stands almost entirely on the strength of its storylines. As with his "Unknown Soldier" stories a few years ago, the merits of Michelinie's scripts are so great as to balance even the most abysmal artwork, in this case, the crude layouts and uninteresting execution by John Romita, Jr. Though Bob Layton's finishes help out quite a bit, its mainly by obscuring Romita's work under a cloud of zip-a-tone and inking effects. The result is tolerable, rather than palatable.

Michelinie's storyline is something else again, a unique fusion of superhero action and political thriller. Once again, someone is out to take over Stark International, which would seem to be the biggest corporation in the Marvel universe. In this case, the reader's sympathies are divided, since the takeover is being engineered by Nick Fury and his SHIELD cohorts, for reasons of "national security"; it seems that Stark's proficiency in munitions is too badly needed to allow his company to specialize in washing machines and such. It's a wholly logical and believable reaction on the government's part, and one that should have been explored years ago, when the changeover was first made. Michelinie supports his premise with a multitude of background and incidental details, such as a NATO conference being held on the helicarrier, the presence of a renegade cell group among the SHIELD heirarchy. IRON MAN has long been one of the more mundane elements of the Marvel universe. Bill Mantlo recently tapped some of the unused potential in his Midas serial, which had a somewhat similar springboard, but Michelinie's promises to be the most exciting story in a mainline Marvel title in years.

--Pierce Askegren.

IRON MAN #120

March 1979, Writer: DAVID MICHELINIE, Artists: JOHN ROMITA, JR., BOB LAYTON...The rejuvinated Iron Man continues, recapturing the flavor of Marval's early period, and reworking old plotlines successfully, showing that somebody indeed cares. Only a deep concern in their finished work could make yet another brawl between Namor and Iron Man of any interest whatsoever. Worth reading.

--Steven Alan Bennett (5)

JOHN CARTER, WARLORD OF MARS #21

February 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artists: ERNIE COLON, FRANK SPRINGER...It is announced herein that Ernie Colon will depart as artist soon; I was pleased with some of his earlier issues, but this one was merely workmanlike in the art department. The scripting by Claremont is satisfactory, more in the Burroughs keep-it-moving adventure tradition than the kind of character exploration and subtleties he's using in X-Men. This is a book I buy not so much out of a desperate craving to follow the adventures of John Carter as a curiousity to see what the creative team has done this time. It seems to me that Claremont is straining a bit to keep up the difficulties for his characters, but the winged men, upside-down city of Karanthor, etc. are enjoyable creations.

--Mark Willard

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #164

March 1979, Writer: GERRY CONWAY, Artists: DICK DILLIN, FRANK McLAUGHLIN...The artists prove their competence, and interesting ideas surface on occasion, but the issue reads like a primer on how not to write comics. It contains the first half of one story tacked onto the second half of another, Red Tornado narrating the story and thereby putting it into an awkward past tense for no reason, Red Tornado suddenly not narrating the story for an equally nonexistent reason, and many key bits of information given superflously or ineffectively in panel captions.

Gerry Conway, return to your 8th grade English class--and this time pay attention.

--Paul Emrath (4)

LAFF-A-LYMPICS #13

March 1979, Writer: MARK EVANIER, Artists: SCOTT SHAW, DAN SPIEGLE...Believe it or not, this is a very funny comic book. Especially for me, because most of my childhood friends were H-B characters, and every issue is sort of like old home week for me.

Besides being very, very funny, Mark Evanier has done a lot of research because each and every one of the literally dozens of characters are in character.

This issue is made up into three chapters, with each chapter having a separate artist. The best work is of course done by Scott Shaw, who beautifully captures the flavor and feeling involved in some of the early H-B cartoons.

A pity, this being the last issue from Marvel. --Steven Alan Bennett (10)

MARVEL PREMIERE #45 (MAN-WOLF)

Writer: DAVID KRAFT, Artists: GEORGE PEREZ, FRANK GIACOIA...The original Man-Wolf series was probably one of the least-loved series I encountered in Marvel's horror-period-- I mean, despite Kraft's oddball writing, how much can you do with a totally-mindless monster? Toward the end of the series, of course, came one of those drawn-out fantasy-serials that so often get interrupted by cancellation. At the time I was not as disturbed by the cessation of developments in Man-Wolf as I was in the promising storylines of Ka-Zar and Son of Satan. Happily, I can now say my lack of interest was thoroughly unjustified.

In MARVEL PREMIERE #45, David Kraft and George Perez have merged their talents again, this time in a form not unlike that of Burrough or Kline, for whom Kraft has professed admiration. The cover blurb calls it "Swords and Sorcery Beyond the Stars," which is a nice change, since most recent swords-and-sorcery has belonged Under the Ground. As with WEIRDWORLD, Man-Wolf provides a kind of challenging heroic fantasy that comics rarely attempt without a pre-sold name like STAR WARS or JOHN CARTER OF MARS.

The most interesting change is that, for the present adventure, Man-Wolf acquires his human intelligence, and yet does not lose any of his savagery for it, as the Werewolf did when Doug Moench took that strip. Usually the heroes of such space-fantasies have been strong-jawed versions of a famous Virginian, and Man-Wolf makes a fascinating change (one possible, I might add, in no other medium but comics.)

The story relates in part the evocative origin of the Man-Wolf, how John Jameson was infused with the essence of a nether-worldly god-king, and how he gets mixed up in a rebellion against the oppressors of that nethoworld--again, it easily beats out a similar tack used in WEREWOLF BY NIGHT, by virtue of Kraft's elegant style. Though the characters are simply drawn, and the conflict is not elaborated, the entire tale moves with such admirable timing, and is so interspersed with fantastic wonders and heady emotions of fear, anger, and grief, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And as usual, Kraft manages to work in an intriguing conflict about Man-Wolf's supposed "godhood."

Of course George Perez outdoes himself, freed from repetitious superheroes, and allowed to indulge in far-flung fantasy of strange creatures, weird landscapes and wild heroics, every bit as skillfully handled with reagard to timing. Possibly it is the best single work he has yet produced; certainly it is his best collaboration with Kraft.

With wolvish voracity, I wait to consume the conclusion of this mini-epic, which might not have been possible but for the able editorship of Roger Stern, who more or less violated a convention that MARVEL PREMIERE should feature only previously-unseen features. Stern, Kraft, and Perez still constitute some of the few effective people at Marvel and who are, in spite of everything still doing their best to keep up the sagging standards of Marvel Comics.

--Gene Phillips (9)

MARVEL TEAM-UP #79

March 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artist: JOHN BYRNE...This is not the abject and inane silliness you would expect from the concept. In the long line of success' scored by the Claremont/Byrne in MTU, this is their finest moment, and one of the best comics of 1978.

Light, sound, color, action. There's no way to describe this mad swirl of graphics art than that. I can point out, however, that John Byrne somehow manages to superimpose the style of Frank Thorne over his own while drawing Red Sonja, producing incredible results. The jagged lines of Thorne under the subtle smoothness of John Byrne is impossible to imagine without reading #79.

Glynis Wein's colors make you realize colorists aren't all housewives picking up a few extra dollars during their free time. The pages explode with light and shadow. She's come up with colors the primary four have never seen before, and it makes this issue. --Steven Alan Bennett (10)

MARVEL TEAM-UP #80

April 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artists: MIKE VOSBURG, GENE DAY...Fairly common plot about the good buy (Dr. Strange) going crazy (through no fault of his own) and his friends try to help (Spider-Man & Clea). Claremont adds a few twists and does an adequate job. Thebook is worth buying for Mike Vosburg's art. He has an interesting approach to comic art.

--Roger Caldwell STORY (5) ART (9)

MS. MARVEL #22

February 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artists: MIKE VOSBURG, MIKE ZECK...Another book with extended fight scenes, but Claremont does some nice things with Ms. Marvel's confrontation with Death-Bird. At least Carol isn't editing WOMAN anymore, a job she was clearly not qualified for. Zeck inked Vosburg very well, but must we be treated to so much beat-em-up plots (here between two women, but Vosburg's art is nice) with the hero or heroine saying at the end: "I was lucky tonight. Next time, if I'm not in top form, I could very easily end up dead!"

--Roger Caldwell STORY (6) ART (8)

POPEYE THE SAILOR MAN #143

January 1979, Writer: BILL PEARSON, Artist: GEORGE WILDMAN...Another consistently good issue. The story is an expanded comic strip, more or less, and has enough looseness in plot to let gag follow gag, each being executed to its full potential for laughs without becoming trite or boring. And although the satire is soft and on the gentle side, its a nice reminder of the strip under Segar.

The art is consistently high, but the real praise belongs to Bill Pearson's script. Popeye remains splendedly in character throughout, but the crowning glory is the effective use of spinach, the first time Bill has used this worn out plot device. But he does manage to skillfully use it to the advantage of the story.

--Steven Alan Bennett (10)

SPIDER-WOMAN #13

April 1979, Writer: MARK GRUENWALD, Artists: CARMINE INFANTINO/GORDON...Nothing much happens here, except Jessica gets a job and meets up with the Shroud. It is interesting to see Infantino do the Batman (aka: The Shroud) again, but his stylized pencils really leave something to be desired these days. Surely something really interesting could be done with this character.

--Roger Caldwell STORY (6) ART (8)

STAR WARS #2)

March 1979, Writer: ARCHIE GOODWIN, Artists: CARMINE INFANTINO, GENE DAY...A fine story is marred by the uneven art of Infantino, and when the art is fine, its due to Gene Day, and colorist George Roussos. Leia's face, half covered in shadows on page three is beautifully handled, and the first page of the "Interlude" is filled with a magnificent burst of color.

--Steven Alan Bennett (5)

SUPERBOY AND THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #248-9

February/March 1979, Writer: GERRY CONWAY, Artists: JOE STATON, DAVE HUNT/JACK ABEL... Whenever Conway takes over a book he likes to disregard past character developments and just use his own standard, interchangable characterizations. In this two-parter he has Legionnaires act totally out of character, he starts sub-plots that are illogical, and generally screws everything up. Had Conway concentrated on the Mantis Morlo plot (who is finished off in two pages) instead of bringing in the subplots he totally botches, he would have been much better off. In the first installment he spends seven pages setting up the monster in the sewers plot. The rest of the book consists of three sub-plots that make no sense. He has Lightning Lad lie to Saturn Girl (something he wouldn't do) He has Brainac Five refuse to help Shadow Lass (something totally out of character for Brainiac. This is not resolved in the second installment and no reason is given for his irresponsible behavior. Brainiac Five would have rushed to help her) He has Mon-El react totally out of character and he turns Mon-El into a cry-baby (as Conway is wont to do with good characters). He has R.J. Brande go bankrupt (something Conway likes to do to rich characters); the richest man in the Galaxy. The second installment again has Mon-El and Brainiac Five acting like idiots. And then on the next to last page, Conway introduces the villain and he is finished off in four panels! This story was ineptly written and edited. This two-parter was a total waste of everyone's time.

STORY (1) ART ON BOTH ISSUES (3)

Hunt's inks don't fit Staton, and neither do Abel's, but Abel's inks are better.

The nine page back-up, (Writer: PAUL KUPPERBERG, Artist: JOE STATON, in #249) was quite good. It is neatly written in just nine pages (could Conway write a nine page super-hero story?) and is a nice short featuring Chameleon Boy. Staton inks his own pencils very nicely on this one, and captures some of the whimsey that characterized his work on E-Man.

--Roger Caldwell (8)

SUPERMAN #333

March 1979, Writer: MARTY PASKO, Artists: CURT SWAN, FRANK CHIARAMONTE... Pasko wants to convince us he is Roy Thomas and still give us traditional Schwartz plot tricks. The combination is not superb, but it's not bad either--even when applied to a Bizarro story. (A semi-annual Bizarro tale probably exceeds the saturation level for most readers)

Swan portrays the characters with his usual clarity and accuracy. Night scenes with heavy blacks, a script calling for nearly six panels a page, and the pen work of Chiaramonte (Swan's best inker since Murphy Anderson) eliminate some of the empty spaces that at times detract from his pencils

--Paul Emrath (6)

COMICS REVIEWS
CONTINUED

THOR #281-282

March 1979, April 1979, Writers: MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO with help from PETER GILLIS and MIKE CATRON, Artists: KEITH POLLARD, PABLO MARCOS...As Mark Gruenwald continues his appointed task of repairing the damage done by the various continuity conundrums (ahem) contained in the Marvel Universe, he will occasionally turn up with a winner. In this case, however, his team was hard pressed to escape with a tie earned on a disputed call. What the 199th and 200th journeys into mystery of the mighty Thor amounted to was a story without a real plot, done solely for the sake of tying up several previously-unrelated loose ends. The saving grace was that it was done with a certain amount of style and a great deal of class.

Net effects on the Marvel Universe: Immortus is established as the undisputed Master of Time (a remarkable achievement for a poor gypsy boy); the characters of Tempus, They, and the Space Phantom are explained to a degree; and Thor's hammer is stripped of its time-spanning power.

--Dick O'Malley (6)

WARLORD #19

March 1979, Writer: MIKE GRELL, Artists: MIKE GRELL, VINCE COLLETTA...Grell takes the struggle between Travis and Deimos a small but interesting step forward. In the process he gives us a story complete with its own climax and resolution. Grell's always attractive art works even more effectively when not hampered by a ton of verbiage.

Only Colletta's inking prevents the issue from notching a perfect score. Obtaining a better inker for the book is probably not a reasonable prospect. After all, to ink a monthly title, an artist would have to work more than two hours a day--a torturous schedule, as any factory worker will tell you.

--Paul Emrath (9)

X-MEN #120

April 1979, Writer: CHRIS CLAREMONT, Artists: JOHN BYRNE, TERRY AUSTIN... Claremont's story is another one of his continued stories that refused to take up sub-plots began in past issues. The plot this time is familiar Marvel stuff about one group of heroes trying to capture another (Wolverine in this case). Claremont has done some nice work with the characterization of the X-Men, and there are some nice scenes here. But it seems that Claremont doesn't want to clear up existing sub-plots nor tell a story in a single issue. The comic is, nevertheless, one of the best published.

--Roger Caldwell (8)

SHOGUN WARRIORS #1 (February 1979) #2 (March 1979) #3 (April 1979)

*Writer: DOUG MOENCH, Artists: HERB TRIMPE, DAN GREEN...*A book to challenge the mindlessness of Devil Dinosaur! The Shogun Warriors are super giant robots from the Shogun Sanctuary (where else?) who must fight creatures who have crawled out of a volcano who plan on destroying earth. The good Dr. Tambura kidnaps a black, a woman, and a man and eventaully gives them a giant robot all to themselves (issue #2), named, respectively, Dangard Ace, Combatra, Raydeen. They operate the robots from inside, going on to fight creatures in the form of the elemental (moronic?) earth, fire, and water. What can I say, Doug? Original? Provocative? Issue four promises a fight with the Mech-Monster! Oh, boy.

Moench and Trimpe work well together, Moench stealing plots and dialogue from early Kirby stories with such clumsiness that the book is almost a parody of an awful fannish story in the Kirby mode (is this book a joke?) and Trimpe complementing him perfectly by swiping layouts, facial expressions, machines, and these robots (which look strangely Japanese and would probably fit well in one of Toho Films masterpieces) from Kirby. Avoid it. --Bill-Dale Marcinko (2)

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA #1 (March 1979) #2 (April 1979)

Writer: ROGER McKENZIE, Artist: ERNIE COLON.

When I watched the three hour long episode of BG, I said to myself: this would get by as a comic book. In comics, the shallow characterizations and real lack of originality are commonplace. To see BG in live action shows how transparent the plot and premise of the series truly is. I awaited the comic, thinking BG as comic should be much more convincing than BG as film.

I was wrong.

Roger McKenzie and Ernie Colon do nothing to improve or embellish the pilot of BG. The two issues above are the first installments of the first BG episode. There is little change. The lifeless art and unimagative adaptation does not work, except of course to lure thousands of pre-adolescent boys who are addicted to Star Wars and similar model space ship space war scenarios into buying it, and therefore making it into one of Marvel's most popular titles. This is not a comic book, it is a poor attempt to cash in on a popular show. It gets what it deserves.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko (0)

THE SILVER SURFER
KILLED BY HIS CREATORS

Imagine Sherlock Holmes without Doctor Watson, or Tarzan never having met Jane. Try to conjure up a picture in your mind of Chang without Eng, or Laurel without Hardy. And take a moment of your time to think of the origin of the Silver Surfer without Alicia, the Watcher, or the Fantastic Four.

Can't do it, can you? Well, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby can. For in their Silver Surfer novel-lengther, which I've been anxiously awaiting for what seems like at least a decade, they've rewritten history with the ease and seeming lack of conscience of a Newspeaker straight out of George Orwell's 1984.

In the past, whenever I was maddened by the way other media changed comics characters to suit their own distorted ideas about superheroes, I could always console myself with my angry self-righteousness, because I could rage against those other idiots who ran the TV networks, and who didn't really know what the comics world was about. "Boy!" I'd think. I'd have nothing to complain about! He'd keep those Hollywood producers from tinkering with his creations! He'd do it right!

Please have pity on this poor comics fan, to have his illusions shattered after so long. For with Stan at last having his hands on the creative reins with this new Silver Surfer "novel," the product is as much of a sell-out as any hack's boob tube output of drivel.

I have no complaints with Jack Kirby; the pencils are the best he's done since returning to Marvel, and at last they're minus his wretched scripting. The fault, dear Stanley, lies not in the art, but in the plot. There are nice bits, but that's definitely the kindest statement I can make about this book's warped storyline.

Stan Lee's seeming denial of his earlier creative genius and his refusal to leave well enough alone has destroyed the Silver Surfer legend, especially for those readers whose first meeting with the Surfer will be in this ill-conceived book. I'd recommend the original over this totally ruined rehashing any day. There is but one way to enjoy this book-- try to convince yourself while reading it that it's an adventure of a counter-Earth Surfer. That way there's a slim chance you can ignore the enormity of the cop-out being perpetuated upon you.

Brevity being the soul of wit, let me say but this: Never have so many waited so long for so little.

--Scott Edelman

SUPPRESED PANEL REVEALED
"ZIGGY" CREATOR'S SUICIDE DISCLOSED

CHICAGO (AP) - A group of syndicated cartoonists announced Wednesday the death of their friend "Ziggy" creator Tom Wilson. The group, including "B.C." artist Johnny Hart and "Frank and Ernest's" Bob Thaves, revealed that Wilson had committed suicide in early 1976, but word of his death had been suppressed by Universal Press Syndicate (UPS).

In late January, 1976, an astute syndicate proofreader noted that the Friday, March 16, "Ziggy" panel showed Wilson's Tubby Everyman in a blackened room, apparently dead by hanging. The syndicate called Wilson's Springfield (ILL) home to ask his explanation. In a tear choked voice, Wilson's wife, Sharla, answered, saying that the cartoonist, 31, had shot himself.

She then read from her husband's suicide note. Wilson had become tired of "taking the shits", it read, hinting that an animated cartoon special that had fallen apart in the planning stages was a major reason he had opted to take his own life

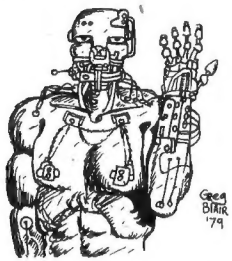
Wilson wrote that he had poured his "life's blood into this strip, and nearly drowned in India ink and Liquid Paper" every day since the premiere of the strip in 1971, but that "Ziggy" had never been given the recognition he thought was due it. His final installment was intended as a statement of "what the world does to the honest little-man", Wilson added, revealing, perhaps, a strong identification between the artist and his perpetually hapless creation.

UPS director Marc Haden responded swiftly to the tragedy, secretly assigning unknown artist Mary Chatalban to the task of penning Ziggy's future adventures. Chatalban, then a recent graduate of Ball State University, filled in capably for Wilson, adopting his easily replicated style and signature. Curiously, "Ziggy" readership has nearly doubled in the intervening two years, Hayden said.

The March 16, 1976 panel was withheld from newspapers. UPS also banned the previous day's strip, which featured Ziggy being defecated on by a giraffe, and was accordingly judged unsuitable for publication.

TOM WILSON'S "SUICIDE" LAST PANEL

COMICS REVIEWS
CONTINUED



*SPIDER-WOMAN #12 (March 1979) #13 (April 1979) Writer: MARK GRUENWALD, Artist: CARMINE INFANTINO, Inker: AL GORDON...*Mark Gruenwald has taken a pathetic title and is beginning to work a strange kind of magic with it. It is almost as endearing and amusing in spots as Howard the Duck was early on, without the self-conscious "Look this is satire" heavy-handedness of Steve Gerber. The story clips on at an incredible pace, Mark knows how to write dialogue that is just right: campy enough to fit the tongue-in-cheek situations, but never slipping into cliche. Not unlike some of the better Avenger scripts. Jessica Drew cares more about her next job than Spider-Woman does about making a splash as a super-heroine ("I'm not Spider-Woman for the glory of it" p. 7). This 'trapped in a world she never made' ambivalence doesn't become as evident as with Gerber (who insists on reminding us of it every third panel). Jessica is genuinely curious about Earth. The next issue looks to be a lot of fun as Jessica checks out the Hatros Institute for Emotional Research (a nice parody of Pop-Psychology Cults), and meets up with the Shroud and strange men with daggars. The issue is worth the 35¢ alone for two panels. In one, a therapy group patient is confessing "My problems stem from childhood. You see, my parents never--" Gruenwald cuts to the Shroud who is observing through a two-way mirror and thinks of his past: "His problems too, began when he was a child. They began the night he saw his parents gunned down in cold blood by a petty hold-up man." A nice parody of Batman's origin.

Infantino's art can be very sloppy and stark at times. Al Gordon doesn't really help matters (but then Dick Giordano seems to be the only good inker for Infantino) Again, his art is an acquired taste. It's not too hard to acquire it. Gruenwald scores well.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko (9)

*JONAH HEX #22 (March 1979) #23 (April 1979) #24 (May 1979) Writer: MICHAEL FLEISHER Artist: VINCENTE ALCAZAR (#22-23), LUIS DOMINGUEZ (#24)...*Why this comic does not get more recognition today among the tide of superhero efforts (75% of which don't come off nearly as well) has always confused me. Michael Fleisher is a brutal, honest, and talented writer. He knows his western genre, he knows how to work within it well, and he is even experimenting with a number of new twists to the Hex persona (He falls in love with a Chinese girl, Mei Ling, and when he attempts to tell her so "Ah never said this to a woman before..." she stops him with "Then don't say it to me, Jonah. It is not really me you love! It is the gentleness within yourself that you see inside me because you are afraid to find it inside yourself!" How's that for a turn down?) Almost all of the characters in Hex are mean and evil, including Hex's father. Violence is played with and exploited again and again. Fleisher is not above morbidity, either: In #22, a black man is about to be hung. And a little boy says "Oh ma! His face has got all green and purple." His mother replies "Thats it, Tommy! Hide your face in my skirt. That way you won't get indigestion." Although Alcazar has a cleaner and more fluid style, both he and Dominguez's work call up the stiff, 19th century etching-type cartooning, and as such are perfectly suited to the book. Not for everyone, but give it a try. In what it attempts to do, it does admirably well.

--Bill-Dale Marcinko (10)

★★★

A SPECIAL NATIONAL MIND SAMPLER

PEACH: Okay, Billy, this is what you'll be doing. Here's two pages from next week's NATIONAL MIND to show you what I want from you.
BILL-DALE: Let me see.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Out of Body, Out of Mind

Dr. Harley Mutnick, author of the bestsellers UFOs AND YOU and THE HAUNTED DISHWASHER, told the NATIONAL MIND about his new book, OUT TO LUNCH, which reports real out-of-body experiences by ordinary people like you and me. He related one incredible case to this reporter, as told to him by June Hapless, a housewife and mother in Elizabeth, NJ.

"I was in bed with my husband one night about 10:00 p.m. I remember him turning to me and saying, 'Hon, could you whip up a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for me?' Suddenly I heard this clanging, like someone was a-bangin' on pots and pans, and then this whoshing, whirring kind of sound, like the second rinse. Before I knew it, my consciousness was sucked out through my brain, and I rose above my body and circled the room. I could see my body there on the bed, next to my husband's. My hair really looked awful."

Mrs. Hapless continued: "I remember going to the kitchen, making a sandwich, and then returning, via the astral plane, to the bedroom. I gave my husband the sandwich. Boy was he surprised! How did you that, hon, he said."

Dr. Mutnick reports that eventually Mrs. Hapless found a way to wash the dishes and hang out the laundry via astral travel. "She can cook and clean while her body's with me," Mr. Hapless reports, happily. "She gets twice as much done. And our sex life is no different than before, either."

The doctor related one case in North Dakota in which a man is asking for a divorce on the grounds that the spirits of her wife and the mailman used to rendesvous astrally at the Grill-O-Mat in local Billings, North Dakota ("Over by the juke box") where they ran up a tab and had extramarital relations. "This is a whole new affair," District Judge Northrop commented.

How To Have Sex

If you are a male, you thrust your penis (the thing in the middle of your body which kind of hangs down or sticks out, depending on what kind of mood you are in) with rhytmic gestures, in and out of the female's vagina (the hole in the middle of her body) until it squirts.

If you are a female, stick out your breasts and show off your thighs until you find a male to do the above, at which point you just sit back and enjoy it.

JAWS 3

A mechanical Nick Nolte costing $3 million to construct and $3 million to operate will be the main star of JAWS 3.

"Considering Nolte's performances in the past, I don't think the audience will notice the difference," producer Morty Moneybags said

Liz Knows

Liz knows she's really a tub these days. "Sure, when I walk into the room and then stop, most of my body keeps moving. It takes a few minutes for the fat under my arms and on my big fat ass to stop jiggling."

BILL DALE ADMITS-

"Sure, I'm 3-D"

In an exclusive interview with reporter F.P. Sensationalism, Bill-Dale Marcinko told the NATIONAL MIND that, as some have rumored, he is three-dimensional. "I am three-dimensional," Bill-Dale said.

"I'm not proud of it or anything. I don't exploit it. That's just the way I am. I will have to live with it. I realize there is a lot of ignorance and hatred involving the 3-D community."

Does Bill-Dale plan to get involved in the political rights movement? "I've never been one for politics. I just want to live my own life."

But being 3-D is still illegal in many states. The Bible still condemns it. How does Bill-Dale deal with these problems? "Well, when I'm out on the street, I try to dress and act 2-D. I know this is hypocritical, but still. I walk sideways."

Is he worried about religious zealots like Anita Looseleaf. "She says that 3-D people try to coerce 2-D kids at school into becoming 3-D like them. That's just not true. Once I was born again, because some churches believe that if you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior you will become 2-dimensional like them, and never have those, er, 3-dimensional "tendencies" again. It didn't work."

"I guess I'll just have to attend the non-dimensional churches."

Bill-Dale feels that many cannot ever understand his feelings. "People think its some kind of aberration, or maybe that it's some kind of phase I'll grow out of. I'd like for them to think of it as another dimension, a whole new way of relating to people."

Alas, the society which spawned people like Bill-Dale may not be able to sustain him. "I'm afraid I'll have to live in one of those 3-D ghettos, like in Greenwich Village. I just want to live a normal life like everyone else. I'm just like you. I don't go to those 3-D movies on 42nd Street in New York or read those 3-D magazines with the special glasses. That's decadent to me."

How Do You Smell

How you smell affects the way people think about you, a University of Michigan survey reports.

--People who smell like lilacs and orange blossoms and crocuses in the spring are considered to be trustworthy, mannerly, but soft-spoken. If they are male, they can expect great success in hairdressing or interior decorating.

--People who smell like Lazagna and Ziti are considered to be greasy, have a short temper, small brain, and be Italian.

--People who smell like mothballs and moldy socks are considered to be intelligent, articulate, and ultimately boring. Most of these people become college professors or optometrists.

--People who smell mediciney don't use Scope, or probably have some disease they are under treatment for. People who smell like Dentists, usually are.

--People who smell like rotten eggs, farts, and week old vomit are considered to be dirty, stupid, and/or dead.

CONTEST

And now-- a new NATIONAL MIND contest. Just write and tell us how you would end all the suffering and pain on Earth, and we'll pay you $10 for every suggestion we use. The winning entries will appear in the next issue of THE NATIONAL MIND. Deadline is April 1, 1979.

What Causes All Disease

Those debilitating, unhealthy and offensive maladies that threaten your health and ruin your entrance at dinner parties are caused by germs, bad chemicals, or other things that we're not sure of yet, says a University of Michigan scientist.

What can we do about it? Well, Dr. Berzerko suggests that we go to a doctor, or maybe the hospital if it's real serious, or buy something from the store to fix it.

The New Travolta

In less than a year, Bill-Dale Marcinko has risen from a complete unknown to the biggest B.N.F. (Big Name Fan) fandom has ever seen.

Rupert Peach and the Cervox Corporation are planning a "BILL-DALE MARCINKO IS THE BEST HUMAN BEING WHO HAS EVER LIVED" campaign which will include tv interviews, a lecture tour on campuses, and a cover story in the new slick weekly, EVERYONE ALIVE.

Bill-Dale speaks: "I intend to use the recognition I've gotten through AFTA to further my own career as a superstar. I'm going to use and exploit all the people who have trusted me and said good things about me when I was struggling to succeed."

Plans are underway to license an entire line of Bill-Dale Marcinko products. The big seller looks like a plastic model "I'm Bill-Dale, Crucify Me" martyr model (or is it martyl moder?). If you punch him in the ribs, he begs for money and complains how much he is in debt. More merchandising products will follow: T-shirts, buttons, stickers, posters (Bill-Dale posing in a wet t-shirt, guys, hubba, hubba), a soundtrack of Bill-Dale talking, laughing, sneezing, and trying to sing. A number of lifesize dolls for younger children and homosexuals will be released. "The dolls are complete with all the naughty bits," Bill-Dale said slyly. "Although those parts are not quite to scale. Mattel said the mold couldn't handle such fine detail."

A future issue will be an all Bill-Dale issue. It will have pictures of Bill-Dale doing ordinary things just like everyone else, like going to the store, eating broccoli, answering the phone, typing, etc. It will reveal the sordid details of his experimentation with drugs, alcoholism, sex, dieting, and UFO's. Watch for it.

"Some people have compared me to Jim Jones, suggesting the devotion and loyalty I demand, but not following through in turn. Not answering letters, remaining aloof. I think the comparison is unfair. Jim Jones wanted people's hearts and minds. I just want their money."

$10 for JOKES KIDS TELL

QUESTION: What's worse than a glass full of pus?
ANSWER: Afterbirth on toast.
--Submitted by Tim Phillips, age 8. Akron, Ohio.

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PROSTATE

How To Make Everyone Like You

We all have trouble making lots of friends Eric Me, in his new book on the subject, suggests a number of ways to be popular with the largest number of people:

--No matter what, always say good things about everyone. Lie if you have to. Never be honest with your true feelings.

--Don't take risks. If you grow or change in new and exciting ways, you will confuse the friends you have and lose them. Therefore, stay the way you are forever.

--Never talk about anything controversial. Religion, politics, sex, psychology, philosophy, history, and your own personal feelings and ideas are touchy subjects. You can talk about movies, tv, and record albums provided you find out how the other person feels about what you are going to say first. Always agree with him, and like what he likes.

--Smile a lot.

--Dress in the current fashion. Wear the kind of clothes your friends wear. Be a clone

--Above all, don't ever let your friends know you really love them (A note: Don't). Nice people don't talk about love. They talk about the weather.

Here is one of THE NATIONAL MIND's Great Ghost Stories. It is the true life experience of Mr. Dan Curtis of Hollywood.

"I'll never forget the night I came home from a busy day at the office producing third-rate tv movies, and I heard a familiar resonant voice. As a strange mist rolled in from the kitchen, I heard...

"You are travelling in another dimension, a dimension not of sight and sound, but of mind. Your next stop, the Twilight Zone..."

"I knew then I had been visited by the ghost of Rod Serling. I stood there and watched the apparition, which was dressed neatly in a grey suit and smoking a cigarette. He had the most severe 5 o'clock shadow I have ever seen on a ghost."

How has this affected producer Curtis? Will he change his life? Will he stop using that awful Robert Cobert music as the background to every show he produces?

"No."

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Fannish No More

How does Bill-Dale Marcinko see the approach to his new magazine, EVERYONE ALIVE? "It will certainly not be fannish. Everyone I've talked to says fannish is a synonym for unprofessional and uncommercial. Fannish is an elitist and worthless concept."

Marcinko enumerates some of the changes. "Instead of personal editorials where I reveal my inner thoughts and feelings, I am going to have a title page, in negative resolution, called the "CONTRIBUTOR'S PAGE" in which I rave on and on and on and on about how great my writers and artists are."

"I'm also getting a number of new writers, getting rid of some of the old ones. I am really lucky to have my hands on (is that a sexist remark?) Mary Bobo. She's a truly dynamic writer. As you remember I'm sure, she first entered fandom and became known in the Great Fun In Life Scandal. She said that fun was sexist, racist, subversive politics perpetuated by the ruling class to keep the people with a sense of humor and who wanted to have fun in line."

This NATIONAL MIND reporter talked to Mary Bobo about her writing style. "Sure, I'm hyper-critical and super-negative of everything in fandom. You see, being critical and nasty and negative makes people think you are a "respectable" fan writer. It covers up the fact that you don't really know what you are talking about, and that you are just in fandom to make money off the fans, which is what I'm into."

Mary Bobo is opening a new store. Her successful mail order business, SEDUCTION OF THE FANS, brings her in contact with many fans, many of whom she is actually nice to. "God forbid I should be nice to any fan, though, if he isn't a customer of mine. That would ruin my image. I don't really like anyone in fandom--I'm here to educate them, because I'm so much smarter and more liberal than those ignorant sexist males."

Bill-Dale also reported plans were afoot to publish a BEST/WORST issue, in which people would write in and vote on the best and worst of his past issues. "It's about time for some real self-indulgence" he said.

How To Live Forever

Immortality, once the concern of religious gurus and mystics has finally been the object of yet another University of Michigan study.

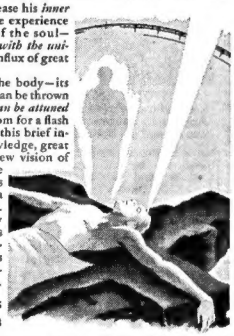
Dr. Berzerko revealed the results of a $4 million, three-year study: "The major obstacle to immortality today seems to be death. If we could just find a way to prevent "death", it is very possible that with a few more million dollars in research money spread out over the next decade, we can come up with even more vague and useless findings"

A SPLIT SECOND IN ETERNITY

The Ancients Called It COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Must man die to release his *inner consciousness?* Can we experience *momentary flights* of the soul—that is, become *one with the universe* and receive an influx of great understanding?

The shackles of the body—its earthly limitations—can be thrown off and *man's mind can be attuned* to the Infinite Wisdom for a flash of a second. During this brief interval intuitive knowledge, great inspiration, and a new vision of our life's mission are had. Some call this great experience a psychic phenomenon. But the ancients knew it and taught it as *Cosmic Consciousness*—the merging of man's mind with the Universal Intelligence.



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LONG DEAD TEEN NEEDS YOUR LETTERS

Sitting in his hospital bed, stiff, bluish, smelling really bad (see HOW YOU SMELL AFFECTS THE WAY PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOU), and accumulating expenses for family and friends, young Jerry Milford doesn't move at all. He is sad and lonely because hardly anyone talks to him anymore or visits him or anything like that. Surely this is because Jerry Milford died three months ago.

Cards and letters from NATIONAL MIND readers can show him that someone cares.

Jerry faces a number of obstacles in his future, said his Doctor, the famous Dr. Bob Berzerko from the University of Michigan. He has no heart beat, no respiration, no motor nerve response, his temperature is 70° (the temperature of the room, coincidentally--the hospital by the way, is still observing the Save Energy program Gerald Ford began a number of years ago). "But his brain still registers some activity, so we know he's in there somewhere. But it is no longer in our hands. Sure we can keep him on the machines indefinitely. But we're talking about the will to live now. Jerry needs some cheering up."

Young Jerry's life was terminated via a tragic accident inspired by Jerry's favorite comedian, Steve Martin. Jerry's friends, who thrilled to Jerry's frighteningly bad impersonations of the popular comedian, demanded that he do Martin's famous "arrow through the head trick."

"I can't really feel sorry for him," Jerry's father admits. "Who does Steve Martin anymore, anyway?"

Won't you take a moment out of your busy life to drop Jerry a line? Please send your cards and letters to: Jerry Milford, 32 Peacock Lane, Rooster's Spleen, Indiana 32874.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

BILL-DALE: This is awful. I can't do articles like this. I'm getting out.

PEACH: I'm afraid that would not be a wise thing to do.

BILL-DALE: Let me out of here, you pig.

Suddenly, the door to the production office burst open, and through it jumped a face familiar to Bill-Dale. The person held a gun.

PEACH: Is that a gun? Don't shoot, please!

--- BLAH! ---

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BILL DALE MARCINKO -- From shopping mall gypsy to superstar

doug cameron

Is the new Bill Dale a better man

or

a mere reflection of his former self?

INSIDE

Gig Young - Man or Myth?

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